A MERCURY PUBLICATION

THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy and Science Fiction

EVERY STORY in this issue NEW

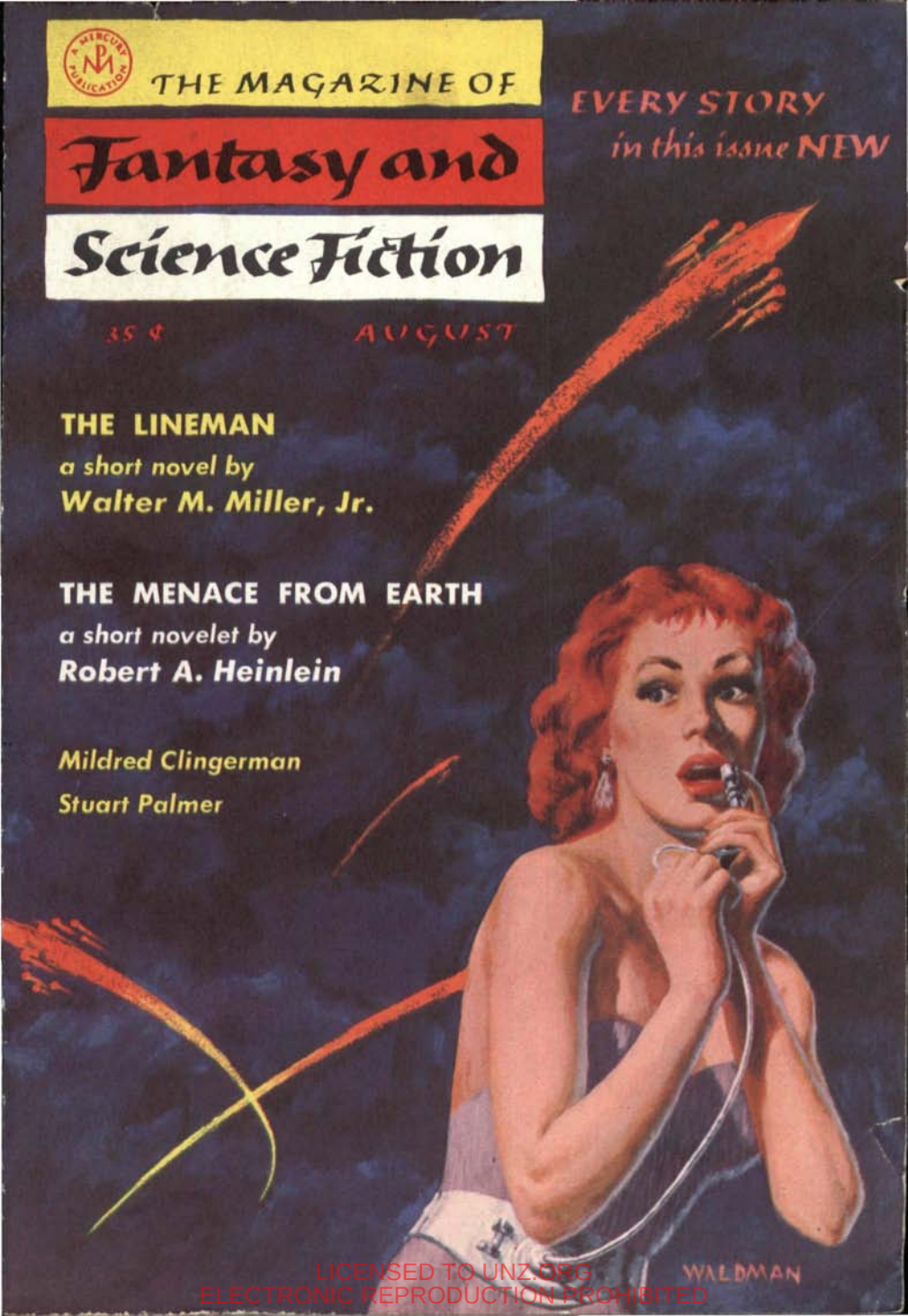
35 ¢ AUGUST

THE LINEMAN
a short novel by
Walter M. Miller, Jr.

THE MENACE FROM EARTH
a short novelet by
Robert A. Heinlein

Mildred Clingerman

Stuart Palmer



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MAGAZINE OF
Fantasy and
Science Fiction

Basil Davenport, writer and editor, judge of the Book-of-the-Month Club, author of "Inquiry Into Science Fiction" writes:

> *"I have been a fan of science fiction all my life, and of The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction for all its life. F&SF gives us some of the best writing in the field, and the field is one of great importance."*

The growing popularity of science fiction is attracting many new readers, including some of the cultural leaders of the nation.

Statesmen, physicians, engineers, educators, chemists, writers, editors—they have all found both entertainment and escape in contemporary science fiction.

Have you read a good science fiction magazine lately?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy and Science Fiction

VOLUME 13, No. 2 AUGUST

EVERY STORY IN THIS ISSUE — NEW!

The Lineman (*short novel*) *by* WALTER M. MILLER, JR. 5
Dream Stuff *by* STUART PALMER 55
A Day for Waving *by* MILDRED CLINGERMAN 64
Homestead *by* ROG PHILLIPS 74
The Science Stage (*a department*) *by* WILLIAM MORRISON 84
Tripod *by* LES COLE 86
The Day Everything Fell Down *by* DAMON KNIGHT & H. KEN BULMER 93
Spanish Spoken *by* DORIS P. BUCK 99
Recommended Reading (*a department*) *by* ANTHONY BOUCHER 104
The Menace from Earth (*short novelet*) *by* ROBERT A. HEINLEIN 109
A Loint of Paw *by* ISAAC ASIMOV 130

"*Coming Next Month*" *appears on page 4*

COVER PAINTING BY BARRY WALDMAN
(*Rocket Spotter, 1992*)

Joseph W. Ferman, PUBLISHER *Anthony Boucher*, EDITOR

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Volume 13, No. 2, Whole No. 75, AUGUST, 1957. Published monthly by Fantasy House, Inc., at 35¢ a copy. Annual subscription, $4.00 in U. S. and Possessions, Canada and the Pan American Union; $5.00 in all other countries. Publication office, Concord, N. H. General offices, 527 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y. Editorial office, 2643 Dana St., Berkeley 4, Calif. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Concord, N. H. under the Act of March 3, 1897. Printed in U. S. A.
© 1957 by Fantasy House, Inc. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved. Submissions must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes; The Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.
J. Francis McComas, ADVISORY EDITOR; *Robert P. Mills*, MANAGING EDITOR; *Gloria Levitas*, ASSISTANT EDITOR; *Constance Di Rienzo*, EXECUTIVE EDITORIAL SECRETARY; *Norma Levine*, EDITORIAL ASSISTANT; *George Salter*, ART EDITOR

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coming Next Month

Our September issue, on the stands around the first of August, will feature two contrasting novelets, one for each part of this magazine's name: for adventurous science fiction, Robert F. Young's *Goddess in Granite,* the compelling story of an interstellar explorer who fell in love with a woman-shaped mountain; and for sheer fantasy, Gordon R. Dickson's *St. Dragon and the George,* the hilarious yet exciting tale of a quest perilous in the Age of Dragons. There'll also be a fresh fictional slant on telepathy by Robert M. Coates, stories new and old by Avram Davidson, Robert Bloch, Chad Oliver, Idris Seabright and other favorites, and Charles Beaumont's quarterly report on the science-fictional and fantastic doings of Hollywood.

Don't miss this exciting issue. Subscribe today and take advantage of our special offer (details below).

Summer Special Subscription Sale

(This offer expires September 20, 1957)

Two Years (24 issues) for only $6.00

Subscribe now and save $2.40. In addition, you will be protected against any postal rate increases. Each copy, mailed in a protective wrapper, will be delivered to your home on or before publication date.

Enjoy the best in science fiction and fantasy stories

F&SF — Summer Special F-Aug.-7

Send me the next 24 issues of The Magazine of FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION. I enclose $6.00 in full payment.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*Zone*....*State*.....

Fantasy House Inc. — 527 Madison Ave., N.Y. 22

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Walter M. Miller, Jr., has hitherto appeared in F&SF only as the author of the celebrated canticles of St. Leibowitz; and some of you may have thought of him as an exclusively religious author—indeed, we have one regular reader who is convinced that he's a pseudonymous cleric. (As the old Irish woman said of the Episcopal priest, "Father is it? And him a married man with four children!") To dispel such suspicions, meet a different Miller: the harsh and brutal chronicler of life among construction men on Luna, where no laws of God or man seem sure of observance . . . and where an alien invasion may be less to be dreaded than the advent of a shipload of Algerian tarts.

The Lineman

by WALTER M. MILLER, JR.

It was August on Earth, and the newscast reported a heat wave in the Midwest: the worst since 2065. A letter from Mike Tremini's sister in Abilene said the chickens were dying and there wasn't enough water for the stock. It was the only letter that came for any of Novotny's men during that fifty-shift hitch on the Copernicus Trolley Project. Everybody read it and luxuriated in sympathy for Kansas and sick chickens.

It was August on Luna too. The Perseids rained down with merciless impartiality; and, from his perch atop the hundred-foot steel skeleton, the lineman stopped cranking the jack and leaned out against his safety belt to watch two demolition men carrying a corpse out toward Fissure Seven. The corpse wore a deflated pressure suit. Torn fabric dragged the ground. The man in the rear carried the corpse's feet like a pair of wheelbarrow handles, and he continually tripped over the loose fabric; his head waggled inside his helmet as if he cursed softly and continuously to himself. The corpse's helmet was translucent with an interior coating of pink ice, making it look like a comic figure in a strawberry ice cream ad, a chocolate ragamuffin with a scoop for a head.

The lineman stared after the funeral party for a time until the team-pusher, who had been watching the slack span of 800 MCM aluminum conductors that snaked half a mile

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

back toward the preceding tower, glanced up at the hesitant worker and began bellowing into his microphone. The lineman answered briefly, inspected the pressure gauge of his suit, and began cranking the jack again. With every dozen turns of the crank, the long snaking cable crept tighter across the lunar plain, straightening and lifting almost imperceptibly until at last the centerpoint cleared the ground and the cable swooped in a long graceful catenary between the towers. It trembled with fitful glistenings in the harsh sunglare. The lineman ignored the cable as he turned the crank. He squinted across the plains at the meteor display.

The display was not spectacular. It could be detected only as a slight turbulence in the layer of lunar dust that covered the ground, and an occasional dust geyser where a pea-sized bit of sky debris exploded into the crust at thirty miles per second. Sometimes the explosion was bright and lingering, but more often there was only a momentary incandescence quickly obscured by dust. The lineman watched it with nervous eyes. There was small chance of being hit by a stone of consequential size, but the eternal pelting by meteoric dust, though too fine to effect a puncture, could weaken the fabric of a suit and lead to leaks and blowouts.

The team-pusher keyed his mic switch again and called to the lineman on the tower. *"Keep your eyes on that damn jack, Relke! That clamp looks like she's slipping from here."*

The lineman paused to inspect the mechanism. *"Looks OK to me,"* he answered. *"How tight do I drag this one up?"*

The pusher glanced at the sagging span of steel-reinforced aluminum cable. *"It's a short stretch. Not too critical. What's the tension now?"*

The lineman consulted a dial on the jack. *"Going on forty-two hundred pounds, Joe."*

"Crank her up to five thousand and leave it," said the pusher. *"Let C-shift sag it in by the tables if they don't like it."*

"Yokay. Isn't it quitting time?"

"Damn near. My suit stinks like we're on overtime. Come on down when you reel that one in. I'm going back to the sleep wagon and get blown clear." The pusher shut off his oxygen while he transferred his hose connections from the main feeder supply to the walk-around bottles on his suit. He signaled "quitting time" at the men on the far tower, then started moon-loping his way across the shaggy terrain toward the train of rolling barracks and machinery that moved with the construction crew as the 200 kilovolt transmission line inched its way across the lunar landscape.

The lineman glanced up absently at the star-stung emptiness of space. Motion caught his eye. He watched with a puzzled frown, then hitched himself around to call after the departing team-pusher.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Hey, Joe!"

The pusher stopped on a low rise to look back. *"Relke?"* he asked, uncertain of the source of the voice.

"Yeah. Is that a ship up there?" The lineman pointed upward toward the east.

"I don't see it. Where?"

"Between Arcturus and Serpens. I thought I saw it move."

The pusher stood on the low tongue of lava and watched the heavens for a time. *"Maybe—maybe not. So what if it is, Relke?"*

"Well . . ." The lineman paused, keying his mic nervously. *"Looks to me like it's headed the wrong direction for Crater City. I mean—"*

The pusher barked a short curse. *"I'm just about fed up with that superstitious drivel!"* he snapped. *"There* aren't *any non-human ships, Relke. And there aren't any non-humans."*

"I didn't say—"

"No, but you had it in mind." The pusher gave him a scornful look and hiked on toward the caterpillar train.

"Yuh. If you say so, Joe," Relke muttered to himself. He glanced again at the creeping point of light in the blackness; he shrugged; he began cranking up the slack span again. But the creeping point kept drawing his gaze while he cranked. When he looked at the tension indicator, it read 5,600 pounds. He grunted his annoyance, reversed the jack ratchet, and began letting out the extra 600 pounds.

The shift-change signal was already beeping in his headsets by the time he had eased it back down to 5,000, and the C-shift crewmen were standing around the foot of the tower jeering at him from below.

"Get off it, boy. Give the men a chance."

"Come on down, Relke. You can let go. It ain't gonna drop."

He ignored the razzing and climbed down the trainward side of the tower. Larkin and Kunz walked briskly around to meet him. He jumped the last twenty-five feet, hoping to evade them, but they were waiting for him when his boots hit the ground.

"We want a little talk with you, Relke, my lad," came Larkin's rich, deceptively affable baritone.

"Sorry, Lark, it's late and I—" He tried to sidestep them, but they danced in and locked arms with him, one on each side.

"Like Lark told you, we want a little talk," grunted Kunz.

"Sure, Harv—but not right now. Drop by my bunk tank when you're off shift. I been in this strait jacket for seven hours. It doesn't smell exactly fresh in here."

"Then, Sonny, you should learn to control yourself in your suit," said Larkin, his voice all mellifluent with smiles and avuncular pedagoguery. *"Let's take him, Harv."*

They caught him in a double armlock, hoisted him off the ground, and started carrying him toward a low lava ridge that lay a hundred

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

yards to the south of the tower. He could not kick effectively because of the stiffness of the suit. He wrenched one hand free and fumbled at the channel selector of his suit radio. Larkin jerked his stub antenna free from its mounting before Relke could put in a call for help.

"Tch tch tch," said Larkin, waggling his head.

They carried him across the ridge and set him on his feet again, out of sight of the camp. *"Sit down, Sonny. We have seeeerious matters to discuss with you."*

Relke heard him faintly, even without the antenna, but he saw no reason to acknowledge. When he failed to answer, Kunz produced a set of jumper wires from his knee pocket and clipped their suit audio circuits into a three way intercom, disconnecting the plate lead from an r.f. stage to insure privacy.

"You guys give me a pain in the hump," growled the lineman. "What do you want this time? You know damn well a dead radio is against safety rules."

"It *is*? You ever hear of such a rule, Kunz?"

"Naah. Or maybe I did, at that. It's to make things easy for work spies, psych checkers, and time-and-motion men, ain't that it?"

"Yeah. You a psych checker or a time-and-motion man, Relke?"

"Hell, you guys know damn well I'm not—"

"Then what are you stalling about?" Larkin's baritone lost its mellowness and became an ominous growl. "You came nosing around, asking questions about the Party. So we let you in on it. We took you to a cell meeting. You said you wanted to join. So we let you in on two more meetings. Then you chickened out. We don't like that, Relke. It smells. It smells like a dirty informing rat!"

"I'm no damn informer!"

"Then why did you welsh?"

"I didn't welsh. I never said I'd join. You asked me if I was in favor of getting the Schneider-Volkov Act repealed. I said 'yes.' I still say 'yes.' That doesn't mean I want to join the Party."

"Why not, Relke?"

"Well, there's the fifty bucks, for one thing."

"Wh-a-a-at! One shift's wages? Hell, if that's all that's stopping you —Kunz, let's pay his fifty bucks for him, okay?"

"Sure. We'll pay your way in, Relke. I don't hold it against a man if he's a natural born tightwad."

"Yeah," said Larkin. "All you gotta do is sign up, Sonny. Fifty bucks, hell—that's less than union dues. If you can call that yellow-bellied obscenity a union. Now how about it, Relke?"

Behind the dark lenses of his glare goggles, Relke's eyes scanned the ground for a weapon. He spotted a jagged shard of volcanic glass and edged toward it.

"Well, Relke?"

"No deal."

"Why not?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That's easy. I plan on getting back to Earth someday. Conspiracy to commit mutiny rates the death penalty."

"Hear what he said, Lark? He calls it mutiny."

"Yeah. Teacher's little monitor."

"C'mere, informer."

They approached him slowly, wearing tight smiles. Relke dived for the shard of glass. The jumper wires jerked tight and broke loose, throwing them off balance for a moment. He came up with the glass shard in one fist and backed away. They stopped. The weapon was as good as a gun. A slit suit was the ultimate threat. Relke tore the dangling wires loose from his radio and backed toward the top of the ridge. They watched him somberly, not speaking. Larkin waved the lineman's stub antenna and looked at him questioningly. Relke held out a glove and waited for him to toss it. Larkin threw it over his shoulder in the opposite direction. They turned their backs on him. He loped on back toward the gravy train, knowing that the showdown had been no more than postponed. Next time would be worse. They meant to incriminate him, as a kind of insurance against his informing. He had no desire to be incriminated, nor to inform—but try to make them believe that.

Before entering the clean-up tank, he stopped to glance up at the heavens between Arcturus and Serpens. The creeping spot of light had vanished—or moved far from where he had seen it. He did not pause to search. He checked his urine bottle in the airlock, connected his hoses to the wall valves, and blew the barn-smell out of his suit. The blast of fresh air was like icy wine in his throat. He enjoyed it for a moment, then went inside the tank for a bath.

Novotny was waiting for him in the B-shift line crew's bunkroom. The small pusher looked sore. He stopped pacing when Relke entered.

"Hi, Joe."

Novotny didn't answer. He watched while Relke stowed his gear, got out an electric razor, and went to the wall mirror to grind off the blond bristles.

"Where you been?" Novotny grunted.

"On the line where you saw me. I jacked that last span up tighter than you told me. I had to let her back down a little. Made me late getting in."

The pusher's big hand hit him like a club between the shoulder blades, grabbed a handful of coverall, and jerked him roughly around. The razor fell to the end of the cord. Novotny let go in back and grabbed a handful in front. He shoved the lineman back against the wall.

Relke gaped at him blankly.

"Don't give *me* that wide blue-eyed dumb stare, you sonofabitch!" the pusher snapped. "I saw you go over the hill with Kunz and Larkin."

Relke's Adam's apple did a quick

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

genuflection. "If you saw me go, you musta seen *how* I went."

Novotny shook him. "What'd they want with you?" he barked.

"Nothing."

Joe's eyes turned to dark slits. "Relke, I told you, I told the rest of my men. I told you what I'd do to any sonofabitch on my team that got mixed up with the Party. Pappy don't allow that crap. Now shall I do it to you here, or do you want to go down to the dayroom?"

"Honest, Joe, I'm not mixed up in it. I got interested in what Larkin had to say—back maybe six months ago. But I never signed up. I never even meant to."

"Six months? Was that about the time you got your Dear John letter from Fran?"

"Right after that, Joe."

"Well, that figures. So what's Larkin after you about now?"

"I guess he wonders why I asked questions but never joined."

"I don't want your guesses. What did he say out there, and what did you say to him?"

"He wanted to know why I didn't sign up, that's all."

"And you told him what?"

"No deal."

"So?"

"So, I came on back and took a shower."

Novotny stared at him for a few seconds. "You're lying," he grunted, but released him anyway. "OK, Relke, but you better listen to this. You're a good lineman. You've stayed out of trouble. You get along with the rest of the team. If you got out of line in some *other* way, I'd figure it was about time you let off some steam. I'd stick up for you. But get mixed up with the Party—and I'll stomp you. When I'm through stomping you, I'll report you off my team. Understand?"

"Sure, Joe."

Novotny grunted and stepped away from him. "No hard feelings, Relke."

"Naah." The lineman went back to the mirror and started shaving again. That his hand remained steady was a surprise to him. Novotny had never before laid a hand on him, and Relke hoped the first time would be the last. He had watched Joe mop up the dayroom with Benet for playing fast and loose with safety rules while working a hotstick job, and it put Benet in sick bay for three days. Novotny was small, but he was built like a bunker. He was a fair overseer, but he handled his men in the only way he knew how to handle them on such a job. He expected self-discipline and self-imposed obedience, and when he didn't get it, he took it as a personal insult and a challenge to a duel. Out on the lava, men were pressure-packed, hermetically sealed charges of high explosive blood and bone; one man's folly could mean the death of several others, and there was no recourse to higher authority or admonitions from the dean, with a team on the lava.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What's your grudge against the Party, Joe?" Relke asked while he scraped under his neck.

"No grudge. Not as long as Benet, Braxton, Relke, Henderson, Beasley, Tremini, and Novotny stay out of it. No grudge at all. I'm for free love and nickel beer as much as the next guy. But I'm not for getting my ass shot off. I'm not for fouling up the whole Lunar project just to get the Schneider-Volkov Act repealed, when you can't get it repealed that way anyhow. I'm not for facing a General Space Court and getting sentenced to blowout. That's all. No grudge."

"What makes you think a general strike couldn't force repeal, Joe?"

The pusher spat contemptuously at the disposal chute and missed. "A general strike on the Lunar Project? Hell, Relke, use your head. It'd never work. A strike against the government is rough to pull off, even on Earth. Up here, it'd be suicide. The Party's so busy yelling about who's right and who's wrong and who's getting a raw deal—and what they ought to do about it—that they forget the important point: who's in the driver's seat. So what if we shut down Copernicus and all the projects like this one? Copernicus has a closed ecology, its own plant-animal cycle, sure. We don't need much from Earth to keep it running—but there's the hitch: don't need *much*. The ecology slips out of balance now and then. Every month or two it has to get a transfusion from Earth. Compost bacteria, or a new strain of algae because our strain starts mutating—it's always something like that. If a general strike cut us off from Earth, the World Parliament could just sit passing solemn gas through their waffle-bottom chairs and wait. They could debate us to death in two months."

"But world opinion—"

"Hell, *they* make world opinion, not *us*."

Relke stopped shaving and looked around. "Joe?"

"Yah."

"Kunz and Larkin'd kill me for telling you. Promise not to say anything?"

The pusher glowered at him for a moment. "Look, Relke, nobody brutalizes Joe Novotny's men. I'll handle Kunz and Larkin. You'd better spill. You think it's informing if you tell *me?*"

Relke shook his head. "Guess not. OK, Joe. It's this: I've been to three cell meetings. I heard some stuff. I think the strike's supposed to start come sundown."

"I heard that too. If it does, we'll all be—" He broke off. The cabin's intercom was suddenly blaring.

Attention, all personnel, attention. Unidentified bird at thirty degrees over horizon, south-southwest, braking fire for landing in our vicinity. All men on the line take cover. Safety team to the ready room on the double. Rescue team scramble, rescue team scramble.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Relke rolled the cord neatly around the razor and stared at it. "I'll be damned," he muttered. "It *was* a ship I saw. What ship would be landing way the hell out here?" He glanced around at Novotny.

The pusher was already at the periscope viewer, his face buried in the sponge rubber eyepieces. He cranked it around in a search pattern toward the south-southwest.

"See anything?"

"Not yet . . . *yeah,* there she is. Braking in fast—now what the hell!"

"Give me a look."

They traded turns at the viewer.

"She's a fusion furnace job. Cold fusion. Look at that blue tail."

"Why land way out here?"

The hatch burst open and the rest of the men spilled in from the dayroom. A confused babble filled the cabin. "I tole ya and I tole ya!" said Bama Braxton. "That theah mine shaff at Tycho is the play-yun evvydance. Gennlemen, weah about to have stranjuhs in ouah midst."

"Cut that superstitious bullspit, Brax," Novotny grunted. "There *aren't* any aliens. We got enough bogeys around here without you scaring the whoop out of yourself with that line of crap."

"Theah ahn't no aliens!" Braxton howled. "Theah ahn't no *aliens?* Joe, youah bline to the play-yun evvydance!"

"He right, Joe," said Lije Henderson, the team's only Negro and Bama's chief crony. "That mine shaff speak fo' itself."

"That mine's a million years old," Joe snorted, "and they're not even sure it's a mine. I said drop it."

"That *ship* speak fo' itself!"

"Drop it! This isn't the first time a ship overshot Crater City and had to set down someplace else. Ten to one it's full of Parliament waffle-bottoms, all complaining their heads off. Maybe they've got a meteor puncture and need help quick."

The closed-circuit intercom suddenly buzzed, and Novotny turned to see the project engineer's face on the small viewer.

"Are all your men up and dressed, Joe?" he asked when Novotny had answered the call.

"EVERYBODY PIPE DOWN! Sorry, Suds. No—well, except for Beasley, they're up. Beasley's logging sack time."

"The hell Beasley is!" complained Beasley from his bunk. "With you verbing nouns of a noun all yapping like—"

"Shut up, Beez. Go on, Suds."

"We got contact with that ship. They've got reactor troubles. I tried to get Crater City on the line, but there's an outage on the circuit somewhere. I need some men to take a tractor and backtrack toward Copernicus. Look for a break in the circuit."

"Why call me?"

"The communication team is tied up, Joe."

"Yeah, but I'm not a communic—"

"Hell!" Brodanovitch exploded. "It doesn't take an electronics en-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gineer to splice a broken wire, does it?"

"OK, Suds, we'll go. Take it easy. What about that ship?"

The engineer paused to mop his face. He looked rather bleak suddenly. "I don't know if it's safe to tell you. But you'll find out anyhow. Watch out for a riot."

"Not a runaway reactor—"

"Worse, Joe. Women."

"WOMEN!" It was a high piping scream from Beasley. "Did he say *women?*" Beasley was out of bed and into his boots.

"WOMEN!" They came crowding around the intercom screen.

"Back off!" Novotny barked. "Go on, Suds."

"It's a troupe of entertainers, Joe. Clearance out of Algiers. They say they're scheduled for a performance in Crater City, come nightfall. That's all I know, except they're mostly women."

"Algiers! Jeez! Belly dancers . . . !"

The room was a confused babble.

"Wait a minute," said Suds. His face slid off the screen as he talked to somebody in the boss tank. Moments later he was back. "Their ship just put down, Joe. Looks like a safe landing. The rescue team is out there. You'll pass the ship on the way up the line. Get moving."

"Sure, Suds." Novotny switched off and looked around at the sudden scramble. "I'll be damned if you do!" he yelled. "You can't all go. Beasley, Henderson—"

"No, bigod you don't, Joe!" somebody howled. "Draw straws!"

"OK. I can take three of you, no more."

They drew. Chance favored Relke, Braxton, and Henderson. Minutes later they crowded into the electric runabout and headed southeast along the line of stately steel towers that filed back toward Copernicus. The ship was in sight. Taller than the towers, the nacelles of the downed bird rose into view beyond the broken crest of a distant lava butte. She was a freight shuttle, space-constructed and not built for landing on Earth. Relke eyed the emblem on the hull of her crew nacelle while the runabout nosed onto the strip of graded roadbed that paralleled the transmission line back to Crater City. The emblem was unfamiliar.

"That looks like the old *RS Voltaire,*" said the lineman. "Somebody must have bought her, Joe. Converted her to passenger service."

"Maybe. Now keep an eye on the telephone line."

The pusher edged the runabout toward the trolley rods. The overhead power transmission line had been energized by sections during the construction of it, and the line was hot as far as the road had been extended. Transformer stations fed energy from the 200 kilovolt circuit into the 1,500 volt trolley bars that ran down the center of the roadbed. Novotny stopped the vehicle at the end of the finished construction and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sidled it over until the feeler arms crackled against the electrified bus rods and locked in place. He switched the batteries to "charge" and drove on again.

"Relke, you're supposed to be watching that talk circuit, not the ship."

"OK, Joe, in a minute."

"You horny bastard, you can't see their bloomers through that titanium hull. Put the glasses down and watch the line."

"OK, just a minute. I'm trying to find out who owns her. The emblem's—"

"Now, dammit!"

"No marking on her except her serial number and a picture of a rooster—and something else that's been painted over."

"RELKE!"

"Sure, Joe, OK."

"Girls!" marveled Lije Henderson. "Whenna lass time you touch a real girl, Brax?"

"Don' ass me, Lije, don' evum ass me. I sweah, if I evum touch a lady's li'l pink fingah right now, I could —"

"Hell, I could jus' sittin' heah lookin' at that ship. Girls. God! Lemme have those glasses, Relke."

Novotny braked the runabout to a halt. "All right, get your helmets on," he snapped. "Pressure your suits. I'm going to pump air out."

"Whatthehell! *Why,* Joe?"

"So you can get out of this heap. You're walking back. I'll go on and find the break myself."

Braxton squealed like a stuck pig; a moment later all three of them were on him. "Please, Joe. . . . Fuh the love a heaven, Joe, have a haht. . . . Gawd, *women!*"

"Get off my lap, you sonofabitch!" he barked at Braxton, who sat on top of him, grabbing at the controls. "Wait—I'll tell you what. Put the damn binoculars down and watch the line. Don't say another damn word about dames until we find the break and splice it. Swear to that, you bastards, and you can stay. I'll stop at their ship on our way back, and then you can stare all you want to. OK?"

"Joe, I sweah on a stack of—"

"All right, then watch the line."

They drove on in silence. The ship had fired down on a flat stretch of ground about four miles from the construction train, a few hundred yards from the trolley road. They stared at it as the runabout crawled past, and Novotny let the vehicle glide to a halt.

"The ramp's out and the ladder's down," said Relke. "Somebody must have come out."

"Unglue your eyes from that bird and look around," Novotny grunted. "You'll see why the ladder's down." He jerked his thumb toward a row of vehicles parked near the massive ship.

"The rescue team's wagons. But wheah's the rescue team?"

No crewmen were visible in the vicinity of the ship or the parked runabouts. Novotny switched on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

radio, punched the channel selector, and tried a call, reading the call code off the side of the safety runabout.

"Double Able Niner, this is One Four William. Talk back, please."

They sat in silence. There was nothing but the hiss of solar interference from the radio and the sound of heavy breathing from the men.

"Those lucky ole bastahds!" Braxton moaned. "You know wheah they gone, gennlemen? I taya weah they gone. They clambered right up the ladies' ladduh, thass wheah. You know wheah they gone? I taya, alright—"

"Knock it off. Let's get moving. Tell us on the way back."

"Those lucky ole—"

The runabout moved ahead across the glaring land.

Relke: "Joe?"

"Yeah?"

"Joe, on our way back, can we go over and see if they'll let us climb aboard?"

Novotny chuckled. "I thought you were off dames, Relke. I thought when Fran sent you the Dear John, you said dames were all a bunch of—"

"Damn, Joe! You could have talked all day without saying 'Fran.'" The lineman's throat worked a brief spasm, and he stared out across the broken moonscape with dismal eyes.

"Sorry I mentioned it," Novotny grunted. "But sure, I guess one of us could walk over and ask if they mind a little more company on board."

Lije: *"One* of us! Who frinstance —*you?"*

Joe: "No, you can draw for it—not now, you creep! Watch the line."

They watched in silence. The communication circuit was loosely strung on temporary supports beside the roadbed. The circuit was the camp's only link with Crater City, for the horizon interposed a barrier to radio reception, such reception being possible only during the occasional overhead transits of the lunar satellite station which carried message-relaying equipment. The satellite's orbit had been shifted to cover a Russian survey crew near Clavius, however, and its passages over the Trolley Project were rare.

"I jus' *thought,"* Lije muttered suddenly, smacking his fist in his palm.

Relke: "Isn't that getting a little drastic, Lije?"

"I jus' thought. If we fine that outage, less don' fix it!"

Joe: "What kind of crazy talk is that?"

"Lissen, you know what ole Suds want to call Crater City *fo'? He* want to call 'em so's they'll senn a bunch of tank wagons down heah and tote those gals back to town. Thass what he want to call 'em fo'!"

Braxton slapped his forehead. "Luvva God! He's right. Y'all heah that? Is he right, Joe, or is he right?"

"I guess that's about the size of it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"We mi'not evum get a look at 'em!" Braxton wailed.

"Less don' fix it, Joe!"

"I sweah, if I evum touch one of theah precious li'l fingahs, I'd—"

"Shut up and watch the line."

Relke: "Why didn't he use a bridge on the circuit and find out where the break was, Joe?"

"A bridge won't work too well on that line."

"How fah we gonna keep on drivin', Joe?"

"Until we find the break. Relke, turn up that blower a little. It's beginning to stink in here."

"Fresh ayah!" sighed Braxton as the breeze hit them from the fan.

Relke: "I wonder if it's fresh. I keep wondering if it doesn't come out foul from the purifier, but we've been living in it too long to be able to tell. I even dream about it. I dream about going back to Earth and everybody runs away from me. Coughing and holding their noses. I can't get close to a girl even in a dream anymore."

"Ah reckon a head-shrinker could kill hisself a-laughin' over that one."

"Don't talk to me about head shrinkers."

"Watch the damn line."

Braxton: "Talk about *dreams!* Listen, I had one lass sleep shift that I oughta tell y'all about. Gennlemen, if she wasn't the ohnriest li'l—"

Novotny cursed softly under his breath and tried to keep his eyes on both the road and the communications circuit.

Relke: "Let 'em jabber, Joe. I'll watch it."

Joe: "It's bad enough listening to a bunch of jerks in a locker room bragging about the dames they've made. But Braxton! Braxton's got to brag about his dreams. Christ! Send me back to Earth. I'm fed up."

"Aww, Joe, we got nothin' else to talk about up heah."

They drove for nearly an hour and a half without locating the outage. Novotny pulled the runabout off the hot trolleys and coasted to a stop. "I'm deflating the cab," he told them. "Helmets on, pressure up your suits."

"Joe, weah not walkin' back from heah!" Bama said flatly.

"Oh, blow yourself out, Brax!" the pusher said irritably. "I'm getting out for a minute. C'mon, get ready for vacuum."

"Why?"

"Don't say *why* to me outside the sleep-tank, corn pone! Just do it."

"Damn! Novotny's in a humah! Les say 'yassah' to him, Bama."

"You too, Lije!"

"Yassah."

"Can it." Novotny got the pressure pumped down to two pounds, and then let the rest of the air spew out slowly into vacuum. He climbed out of the runabout and loped over to the low-hanging spans of the communication circuit. He tapped into it with the suit audio and listened for a moment. Relke saw his lips moving as he tried a call, but nothing came through the lineman's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

suit radio. After about five minutes, he quit talking and beckoned the rest of them back to the runabout.

"That was Brodanovitch," he said after they were inside and the pressure came up again. "So the circuit break must be on up ahead."

"Oh, hell, we'll *navah* get a look at those ladies!"

"Calm down. We're going back—" He paused a moment until the elated whooping died down. "Suds says let them send a crew out of Copernicus to fix it. I guess there's no hurry about moving those people out of there."

"The less hurry, the bettuh . . . *hot dawg!* C'mon, Joe, roll it!" Bama and Lije sat rubbing their hands. Only Relke seemed detached, his enthusiasm apparently cooled. He sat staring out at the meteor display on the dust-flats. He kept rubbing absently at the ring finger of his left hand. There was no ring there, nor even a mark on the skin. The pusher's eye fell on the slow nervous movement.

"Fran again?" Joe grunted.

The lineman nodded.

"I got my Dear John note three years ago, Relke."

Relke looked around at him in surprise. "I didn't know you were married, Joe."

"I guess I wasn't as married as I thought I was."

Relke stared outside again for awhile. "How do you get over it?"

"You don't. Not up here on Luna. The necessary and sometimes sufficient condition for getting over a dame is the availability of other dames. So, you don't."

"Hell, Joe!"

"Yeah."

"The movement's not such a bad idea."

"Can it!" the pusher snapped.

"It's true. Let women come to Crater City, or send us home. It makes sense."

"You're only looking at the free love and nickel beer end of it, Relke. You can't raise kids in low gravity. There are five graves back in Crater City to prove it. Kids' graves. Six feet long. They grow themselves to death."

"I know but . . ." He shrugged uncomfortably and watched the meteor display again.

"When do we draw?" said Lije. "Come on Joe, less draw for who goes talk ouah way onto the ship."

Relke: "Say, Joe, how come they let dames in an entertainment troupe come to the moon, but they won't let our wives come? I thought the Schneider-Volkov Act was supposed to keep all women out of space, period."

"No, they couldn't get away with putting it like that. Against the WP constitution. The law just says that all personnel on any member country's lunar project must be of a single sex. Theoretically some country—Russia, maybe—could start an all-girl lunar mine project, say. Theoretically. But how many lady muckers do you know? Even in Russia."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lije: "When do we draw? Come on, Joe, less draw."

"Go ahead and draw. Deal me out."

Chance favored Henderson. "Fast-uh, Joe. Hell, less go fastuh, befo' the whole camp move over theah."

Novotny upped the current to the redline and left it there. The long spans of transmission line, some of them a mile or more from tower to tower, swooped past in stately cadence.

"There she is! Man!"

"You guys are building up for a big kick in the rump. They'll never let us aboard."

"Theah's two more cahs pahked over theah."

"Yeah, and still nobody in sight on the ground."

Novotny pulled the feelers off the trolleys again. "OK, Lije, go play John Alden. Tell 'em we just want to look, not touch."

Henderson was bounding off across the flats moments after the cabin had been depressurized to let him climb out. They watched him enviously while the pressure came up again. His black face flashed with sweat in the sunlight as he looked back to wave at them from the foot of the ladder.

Relke glanced down the road toward the rolling construction camp. "You going to call in, Joe? Ought to be able to reach their antenna from here."

"If I do, Brodanovitch is sure to say 'haul-ass on back to camp.'"

"Never mind, then! Forget I said it!"

The pusher chuckled. "Getting interested, Relke?"

"I don't know. I guess I am." He looked quickly toward the towering rocket.

"Mostly you want to know how close you are to being rid of her, maybe?"

"I guess—Hey, they're letting him in."

"That lucky ole bastuhd!" Bama moaned.

The airlock opened as Lije scaled the ladder. A helmet containing a head of unidentifiable gender looked out and down, watching the man climb. Lije paused to wave. After a moment's hesitancy, the space-suited figure waved back.

"Hey, up theah, y'all mind a little company?"

The party who watched him made no answer. Lije shook his head and climbed on. When he reached the lock, he held out a glove for an assist, but the figure stepped back quickly. Lije stared inside. The figure was holding a gun. Lije stepped down a rung. The gun beckoned impatiently for him to get inside. Reluctantly Lije obeyed.

The hatch closed. A valve spat a jet of frost, and they watched the pressure dial slowly creep to ten psi. Lije watched the stranger unfasten his helmet, then undid his own. The stranger was male, and the white goggle marks about his eyes betrayed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him as a spacer. His thin dark features suggested Semitic or Arabic origins.

"Parlez-vous français?"

"Naw," said Lije. "Sho' don't. Sorry."

The man tossed his head and gave a knowing snort. "Ah! Afrique-Américain. Yais. I had forgotten. I misthought you African. Apologeez?"

"Needn' bothuh," said Lije. "Coss, if you feelin' apologetic, you might put that pistola back in yo' boot."

"Ho?" The man looked down at the gun in his hand as if he had forgotten it. "Ho! It is first necessaire that we find out who you are," he explained, and brandished the weapon under Lije's nose. He grinned a flash of white teeth. "Who send you here?"

"Nobody send me. I come unduh my own steam. Some fellas in my moonjeep pulled cahds, and I—"

"Whup! You are—ah *tin Unteroffizier? Mais non,* wrong sprach—you *l'officiale?* Officer? Company man?"

"Who, me? Lahd, no. I'm juss a hot-stick man on B-shif'. You muss be lookin' fo' Suds Brodanovitch."

"Why you come to this ship?"

"Well, the fellas and I heard tell theah was some gals, and we—"

The man waved the gun impatiently and pressed a button near the inner hatch. A red indicator light went on.

"Yes?" A woman's voice, rather hoarse. Lije's chest heaved with sudden emotion, and his sigh came out a bleat.

The man spoke in a flood of French. The woman did not reply at once. Lije noticed the movement of a viewing lens beside the hatch; it was scanning him from head to toe.

The woman's voice shifted to an intimate contralto. "OK, dearie, you come right in here where it's nice and warm."

The inner hatch slid open. It took Lije a few seconds to realize that she had been talking to him. She stood there smiling at him like a middle-aged schoolmarm.

"Why don't you come on in and meet the girls?"

Eyes popping, Lije Henderson stumbled inside.

He was gone a long time.

When he finally came out, the men in Novotny's runabout took turns cursing at him over the suit frequency. *"Fa chrissake, Henderson, we've been sitting here using up oxy for over an hour while you been horsing around . . ."* They waited for him with the runabout, cabin depressurized.

Lije was panting wildly as he ran toward them. *"Lissen to the bahstud giggle,"* Bama said disgustedly.

"Y'all juss don' know, y'all juss don' KNOW!" Lije was chanting between pants.

"Get in here, you damn traitor!"

"Hones', I couldn' help myself. I juss couldn'."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, do the rest of us get aboard her, or not?" Joe snapped.

"Hell, go ahead, man! It's wide open. Evahthing's wide open."

"Girls?" Relke grunted.

"Girls, God yes! Girls."

"You coming with us?" Joe asked.

Lije shook his head and fell back on the seat, still panting. *"Lahd, no! I couldn't stand it. I juss want to lie heah and look up at ole Mamma Earth and feel like a human again."* He grinned beatifically. *"Y'all go on."*

Braxton was staring at his crony with curious suspicion. *"Man, those must be some entuhtainuhs! Whass the mattah with you, Lije?"*

Henderson whooped and pounded his leg. *"Hoo hoo! Hooeee! Entuhtainuhs, he says. Hoo-hooeee! You mean y'all still don' know what that ship is?"*

They had already climbed out of the tractor. Novotny glared back in at Lije. *"We've been waiting to hear it from you, Henderson,"* he snapped.

Lije sat up grinning. *"That's no stage show troupe! That ship, so help me Hannah, is a—hoo hoo hooee—is a goddam flyin' HO-house."* He rolled over on the seat and surrendered to laughter.

Novotny looked around for his men and found himself standing alone. Braxton was already on the ladder, and Relke was just starting up behind.

"Hey, you guys come back here!"

"Drop dead, Joe."

Novotny stared after them until they disappeared through the lock. He glanced back at Lije. Henderson was in a grinning beatific trance. The pusher shrugged and left him lying there, still wearing his pressure suit in the open cabin. The pusher trotted after his men toward the ship.

Before he was halfway there, a voice broke into his headsets. *"Where the devil are you going, Novotny? I want a talk with you!"*

He stopped to glance back. The voice belonged to Brodanovitch, and it sounded sore. The engineer's runabout had nosed in beside Novotny's; Suds sat in the cab and beckoned at him angrily. Joe trudged on back and climbed in through the vehicle's coffin-sized airlock. Brodanovitch glared at him while the pusher removed his helmet.

"What the devil's going on over there?"

"At the ship?" Joe paused. Suds was livid. "I don't know exactly."

"I've been calling Safety and Rescue for an hour and a half. Where are they?"

"In the ship, I guess."

"You *guess!*"

"Hell, chief, take it easy. We just got here. I don't know what's going on."

"Where are your men?"

Novotny jerked his thumb at the other runabout. "Henderson's in there. Relke and Brax went to the ship."

"And that's where you were going

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

just now, I take it," Suds snarled.

"Take that tone of voice and shove it, Suds! You know where you told me to go. I went. Now I'm off. We're on our own time unless you tell us different."

The engineer spent a few seconds swallowing his fury. "All right," he grunted. "But every man on that rescue squad is going to face a Space Court, and if I have any say about it, they'll get decomped."

Novotny's jaw dropped. "Slow down, Suds. Explosive decompression is for mutiny or murder. What-'re you talking about?"

"Murder."

"Wha-a-at?"

"That's what I call it. A demolition man—Hardin, it was—had a blowout. With only one man standing by on the rescue gear."

"Meteor dust?"

"Yeah."

"Would it have made any difference if Safety and Rescue had been on the job?"

Suds glowered. "Maybe, maybe not. An inspector might have spotted the bulge in his suit before it blew." He shook an angry finger toward the abandoned Safety & Rescue vehicles. "Those men are going to stand trial for negligent homicide. It's the principle, damn it!"

"Sure, Suds. I guess you're right. I'll be right back."

Henderson was sleeping in his pressure suit when Novotny climbed back into his own runabout. The cab was still a vacuum. He got the hatch closed, turned on the air pumps, then woke Henderson.

"Lije, you been with a woman?"

"Nnnnnngg-*nnnng!* I hope to tell!" He shot a quick glance toward the rocket as if to reassure himself as to its reality. "And man, was she a little—"

Joe shook him again. "Listen. Brodanovitch is in the next car. Bull mad. I'll ask you again. You been with a woman?"

"Woman? You muss of lost yoah mine, Joe. Lass time I saw a woman was up at Atlanta." He rolled his eyes up toward the Earth crescent in the heavens. "Sure been a long ole time. Atlanta . . . *man!*"

"That's better."

Lije jerked his head toward Brodanovitch's jeep. "What's ole wet blanket gonna do? Chase those gals out of here, I 'spect?"

"I don't know. That's not what he's frothing about, Lije. Hardin got killed while the S&R boys were shacking up over there. Suds doesn't even *know* what's in that ship. He acts like he's got about a dozen troubles running loose at once, and he doesn't know which way to grab."

"He don't even *know?* How we evah gonna keep him from findin' out?" Lije shot another glance at the ship and jumped. "Uh-oh! Looka theah! Yonder they come. Clamberin' down the ladies' ladduh. Theah's Joyce and Lander and Petzel—other one looks like Crump. Half the Safety team, Joe. Hoo-eee! They got that freshly bred look. You

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can evum tell it from heah. Uh-oh!"

Brodanovitch had climbed out of his runabout. Bellowing at his mic, he charged toward the ship. The S&R men took a few lopes toward their vehicles, saw Brodanovitch, and stopped. One man turned tail and bolted for the ladder again. Gesturing furiously, the engineer bore down on them.

"Leave the rádio off, Joe. Sure glad we don' have to listen to that bull bellow."

They sat watching the safety men, who managed somehow to look stark naked despite their bulgey pressure suits. Suds stalked toward them like an amok runner, beating a gloved fist into his palm and working his jaw at them.

"Suds don' know how to get along with men when he *want* to get along with 'em, and he don' know how to fuss at 'em when he don't want to get along. Man, look how he rave!"

"Yeah. Suds is a smart engineer, but he's a rotten overseer."

The ship's airlock opened again and another man started out. He stopped with one foot on the top rung of the ladder. He looked down at Brodanovitch and the S&R men. He pulled his leg back inside and closed the hatch. Novotny chuckled.

"That was Relke, the damn fool."

Lije smote his forehead. "Look at Suds! They tole him! They went an *tole* him, Joe. We'll nevah get back in that ship now."

The pusher watched the four figures on the plain. They were just standing there. Brodanovitch had stopped gesticulating. For a few seconds he seemed frozen. His head turned slowly as he looked up at the rocket. He took three steps toward it, then stopped.

"He gonna have apoplexy, thass what he gonna have."

Brodanovitch turned slowly. He gave the S&R men a blank look, then broke into a run toward his tractor.

"I'd better climb out," Joe said.

He met the engineer beside the command runabout. Suds's face was a livid mask behind the faceplate. *"Get in,"* he snapped at the pusher.

As soon as they were inside, he barked, "Drive us to Crater City."

"Slow down, Suds."

"Joe. That ship. Damn brothel. Out to fleece the camp."

"So what're you going to do in Crater City?"

"Tell Parkeson, what else?"

"And what's the camp going to be doing while you're gone?"

That one made him pause. Finally he shook his head. "Drive, Joe."

Novotny flipped the switch and glanced at the gauges. "You haven't got enough oxygen in this bug to last out the trip."

"Then we'll get another one."

"Better take a minute to think it over, Suds. You're all revved up. What the hell can Parkeson do?"

"What can he *do?* What can—migawd, Joe!" Suds choked.

"Well?"

"He can get that ship out of here,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he can have those women interned."

"How? Suppose they refuse to budge. Who appointed Parkeson king of creation? Hell, he's only *our* boss, Suds. The moon's open to any nation that wants to send a ship, or to any corporation that can get a clearance. The W.P. decided that a long time ago."

"But it's illegal—those women, I mean!"

"How do you know? Maybe their racket's legal in Algiers. That's where you told me they had clearance from, didn't you? And if you're thinking about the Schneider-Volkov Act, it just applies to the Integrated Projects, not wildcat teams."

Brodanovitch sat silent for a few moments, his throat working. He passed a shaky hand over his eyes. "Joe, we've got to keep discipline. Why can't I ever make the men understand that? On a moon project, it's discipline or die. You know that, Joe."

"Sure I know it. You know it. Parkeson knows it. The First Minister of the Space Ministry knows it. But the men don't know it, and they never will. They don't know what the word 'discipline' means, and it's no good trying to tell them. It's an overseer's word. It means your outfit's working for you like your own arms and legs. One brain and one body. When it cracks, you've just got a loose handful of stray men. No coordination. You can see it, but they can't see it. 'Discipline' is just a dirty word in the ranks, Suds."

"Joe, what'll I do?"

"It's your baby, not mine. Give it first aid. Then talk to Parkeson later, if you want to."

Suds sat silent for half a minute, then: "Drive back to the main wagon."

Novotny started the motors. "What are you going to do?"

"Announce Code Red, place the ship off limits, put an armed guard on it, and hope the Crater City crew gets that telephone circuit patched up quick. That's all I can do."

"Then let me get a safe distance away from you before you do it."

"You think it'll cause trouble?"

"Good Lord, Suds, use your head. You've got a campful of men who haven't been close to a dame in months and years, even to talk to. They're sick, they're scared, they're fed-up, they want to go home. The Party's got them bitter, agitated. I'd hate to be the guy who puts those women off limits."

"What would you do?"

"I'd put the screws on the shift that's on duty. I'd work hell out of the crews that are supposed to be on the job. I'd make a horrible example out of the first man to goof off. But first I'd tell the off-duty team pushers they can take their crews over to that ship, one crew at a time, and in an orderly manner."

"*What?* And be an accomplice? Hell, no!"

"Then do it your own way. Don't ask me."

Novotny parked the runabout next

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the boss-wagon. "Mind if I use your buggy for awhile, Suds?" he asked. "I left mine back there, and I've got to pick up my men."

"Go ahead, but get them back here—fast."

"Sure, Suds."

He backed the runabout out again and drove down to B-shift's sleep-wagon. He parked again and used the airlock phone. "Beasley, Benet, the rest of you—come on outside."

Five minutes later they trooped out through the lock. "What's the score, Joe?"

"The red belts are ahead, that's all I know."

"Come on, you'll find out."

"Sleep! I haven't had no sleep since—*Say!* You takin' us over to that ship, Joe?"

"That's the idea."

"YAYHOO!" Beasley danced up and down. "Joe, we love ya!"

"Cut it. This is once-and-once-only. You're going once, and you're not going again."

"Who says?"

"Novotny says."

"But *why?*" Benet wailed.

"What did you say?"

"I said 'why!' "

"OK. I'll tell you why. Brodanovitch is going to put the ship off limits. If I get you guys in under the wire, you've got no gripe later on—when Suds hangs out the big No."

"Joe, that's chicken."

Novotny put on the brakes. "Get out and walk back, Benet."

"Joe—!"

"Benet."

"Look, I didn't mean anything."

Novotny paused. If Brodanovitch was going to try to do things the hard way, he'd lose control of his own men unless he gave them loose rein for a while first—keeping them reminded that he still *had* the reins. But Benet was getting out of hand lately. He had to decide. Now.

"Look at me, Benet."

Benet looked up. Joe smacked him. Benet sat back, looking surprised. He wiped his nose on the back of a glove and looked at the red smear. He wiped it again. The smear was bigger.

"You can stay, Benet, but if you do, I'll bust your hump after we get back. You want it that way?"

Benet looked at the rocket; he looked at Joe; he looked at the rocket. "Yeah. We'll see who does the busting. Let's go."

"All right, but do you see any other guys taking their teams over?"

"No."

"But you think you're getting a chicken deal."

"Yeah."

The pusher drove on, humming to himself. As long as he could keep them alternately loving him and hating him, everything was secure. Then he was Mother. Then they didn't stop to think or rationalize. They just reacted to Mother. It was easy to handle men reacting, but it wasn't so easy to handle men thinking. Novotny liked it the easy way, especially during a heavy meteor fall.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It is of no importance to me," said Madame d'Annecy, "if you are the commandant of the whole of space, M'sieur. You wish entrance, I must ask you to contribute thees small fee. It is not in my nature to become unpleasant like thees, but you have bawl in my face, M'sieur."

"Look," said Brodanovitch, "I didn't come over here for . . . for what you think I came over here for." His ears reddened. "I don't want a girl, that is."

The madame's prim mouth made a small pink O of sudden understanding. "Ah, M'sieur, I begin to see. You are one of those. But in that I cannot help you. I have only girls."

The engineer choked. He started toward the hatch. A man with a gun slid into his path.

"Permit yourself to be restrained, M'sieur."

"There are four men in there that are supposed to be on the job, and I intend to get them. And the others too, while I'm at it."

"Is it that you have lost your boy friend, perhaps?"

Brodanovitch croaked incomprehensibly for a moment, then collapsed onto a seat beside the radar table that Madame d'Annecy was using for an accounting desk. "I'm no fairy," he said.

"I am pleased to hear it, M'sieur. I was beginning to pity you. Now if you will please sign the sight draft, so that we may telecast it—"

"I am *not* paying twelve hundred dollars just to get my men out of there!"

"I do not haggle, M'sieur. The price is fixed."

"Call them down here!"

"It cannot be done. They pay for two hours, for two hours they stay. Undisturbed."

"All right, let's see the draft."

Madame d'Annecy produced a set of forms from the map case and a small gold fountain pen from her ample bosom. "Your next of kin, M'sieur?" She handed him a blank draft.

"Wait a minute! How did you know where my account—"

"Is it not the correct firm?"

"Yes, but how did you know?" He looked at the serial number on the form, then looked up accusingly. "This is a telecopy form. You have a teletransmitter on board?"

"But of course! We could not risk having payment stopped after services rendered. The funds will be transferred to our account before you leave this ship. I assure you, we are well protected."

"I assure you, you are all going to jail."

Madame d'Annecy threw back her head and laughed heartily. She said something in French to the man at the door, then smiled at the unhappy engineer. "What law prevails here, M'sieur?"

"UCOJE does. Uniform Code of Justice, Extraterrestrial. It's a semi-military—"

"U.N.-based, I believe?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Certainly."

"Now I know little of thees matters, but my attorneys would be delighted, I am certain, if you can tell me: which articles of thees UCOJE is to be used for inducing us to be incarcerated?"

"Why . . . Uh . . ." Suds scratched nervously at one corner of his moustache. He glanced at the man with the gun. He gazed forlornly at the sight draft.

"Exactly!" Mme d'Annecy said brightly. "There have been no women to speak of on the moon since the unfortunate predicament of *les enfants perdus*. The moon-born grotesque ones. How could they think to pass laws against thees —thees *ancien* establishment, thees *maison intime*—when there are no women, eh M'sieur?"

"But you falsified your papers to get clearance. You must have."

"But no. Our clearance is 'free nation,' not 'world federal.' We are an entertainment troupe, and my government's officials are most lenient in defining 'entertainment.' *Chacun à son gout,* eh?"

Suds sat breathing heavily. "I can place this ship off limits."

"If you can do that, if the men do not come"—she shrugged eloquently and spread her hands—"then we will simply move on to another project. There are plenty of others. But do you think thees putting us off limits will make you very popular with your men?"

"I'm not trying to win a popularity contest," Suds wheezed. "I'm trying to finish the last twelve miles of this line before sundown. You've got to get out of here before there's a complete work stoppage."

"Thees project. It is important? Of an urgent nature?"

"There's a new uranium mine in the crater we're building toward. There's a colony there without an independent ecology. It has to be supplied from Copernicus. Right now, they're shooting supplies to them by rocket missile. It's too far to run surface freight without trolley service—or reactor-powered vehicles the size of battleships and expensive. We don't have the facilities to run a fleet of self-powered wagons that far."

"Can they not run on diesel, perhaps?"

"If they carry the oxygen to burn the diesel with, and if everybody in Copernicus agrees to stop breathing the stuff."

"*Embarras de choix*. I see."

"It's essential that the line be finished before nightfall. If it isn't, that mine colony will have to be shipped back to Copernicus. They can't keep on supplying it by bird. And they can't move out any ore until the trolley is ready to run."

Mme d'Annecy nodded thoughtfully. "We wish to make the cordial entente with the lunar workers," she murmured. "We do not wish to cause the *bouleversement*—the disruption. Let us then negotiate, M'sieur."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm not making any deals with you, lady."

"Ah, but such a hard position you take! I was but intending to suggest that you furnish us a copy of your camp's duty roster. If you will do that, Henri will not permit anyone to visit us if he is—how you say?—goofing off. Is it not that simple?"

"I will not be a party to robbery!"

"How is it robbery?"

"Twelve hundred dollars! Pay for two day-hitches. Lunar days. Nearly two months. And you're probably planning to fleece them more than once."

"*A bon marché!* Our expenses are terrific. Believe me, we expect no profit from this first trip."

"First trip and last trip," Suds grumbled.

"And who has complained about the price? No one so far excepting M'sieur. Look at it *thus* it is an investment." She slid one of the forms across the table. "Please to read it, M'sieur."

Suds studied the paper for a moment and began to frown. "*Les Folies Lunaires,* Incorporated . . . a North African corporation . . . in consideration of the sum of one hundred dollars in hand paid by—who? —Howard Beasley!—aforesaid corporation sells and grants to Howard Beasley . . . *one share of common stock!*"

"M'sieur! Compose yourself! It is no fraud. Everybody gets a share of stock. It comes out of the twelve hundred. Who knows? Perhaps after a few trips, there will even be dividends. M'sieur? But you look positively ill! Henri, bring brandy for the gentleman."

"So!" he grated. "That's the way it goes, is it? Implicate everybody—nobody squawks."

"But certainly. It is for our own protection, to be sure, but it is really stock."

"Blackmail."

"But no, M'sieur. All is legal."

Henri brought a plastic cup and handed it to him; Suds shook his head.

"Take it, M'sieur. It is real brandy. We could bring only a few bottles, but there is sufficient pure alcohol for the mixing of cocktails."

The small compartment was filled with the delicate perfume of the liquor; Brodanovitch glanced longingly at the plastic cup.

"It is seventy-year-old Courvoisier, M'sieur. Very pleasant."

Suds took it reluctantly, dipped it toward Mme d'Annecy in self-conscious toast, and drained it. He acquired a startled expression; he clucked his tongue experimentally and breathed slowly through his nose.

"Good Lord!" he murmured absently.

Mme. d'Annecy chuckled. "M'sieur has forgotten the little pleasures. It was a shame to gulp it so. *Encore, Henri.* And one for myself, I think. Take time to enjoy this one, M'sieur." She studied him for a time while Henri was absent. She shook her head

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and began putting the forms away, leaving out the sight draft and stock agreement which she pushed toward him, raising one inquisitive brow. He gazed expressionlessly at them. Henri returned with the brandy; Madame questioned him in French. He seemed insistently negative for a time, but then seemed to give grudging assent. *"Bien!"* she said, and turned to Brodanovitch: "M'sieur, it will be necessary only for you to purchase the share of stock. Forget the fee."

"What?" Suds blinked in confusion.

"I said—" The opening of the hatch interrupted her thought. A dazzling brunette in a filmy yellow dress bounced into the compartment, bringing with her a breath of perfume. Suds looked at her and emitted a loud guttural cluck. A kind of glazed incredulity kneaded his face into a mask of shocked granite wearing a supercilious moustache. The girl ignored his presence and bent over the table to chat excitedly in French with Mme. d'Annecy. Suds's eyes seemed to find a mind and will of their own; involuntarily they contemplated the details of her architecture, and found manifest fascination in the way she relieved an itch at the back of one trim calf by rubbing it vigorously with the instep of her other foot while she leaned over the desk and bounced lightly on tiptoe as she spoke.

"M'sieur Brodanovitch, the young lady wishes to know—M'sieur Brodanovitch?—*M'sieur!*"

"What—? Oh." Suds straightened and rubbed his eyes. "Yes?"

"One of your young men has asked Giselle out for a walk. We have pressure suits, of course. But is it safe to promenade about this area?" She paused. "M'sieur, *please!*"

"What?" Suds shook his head. He tore his eyes away from the yellow dress and glanced at a head suddenly thrust in through the hatch. The head belonged to Relke. It saw Brodanovitch and withdrew in haste, but Suds made no sign of recognition. He blinked at Madame again.

"M'sieur, is it safe?"

"What? Oh. I suppose it is." He gulped his brandy and poured another.

Mme. d'Annecy spoke briefly to the girl, who, after a hasty *merci* and a nod at Suds went off to join Relke outside. When they were gone, Madame smilingly offered her pen to the engineer. Suds stared at it briefly, shook his head, and helped himself to another brandy. He gulped it and reached for his helmet. La d'Annecy snapped her fingers suddenly and went to a locker near the bulkhead. She came back with a quart bottle.

"M'sieur will surely accept a small token?" She offered the bottle for his inspection. "It is Mumms 2064, a fine year. Take it, M'sieur. Or do you not care for champagne? It is our only bottle, and what is one bottle of wine for such a crowd? Take it—or would you prefer the brandy?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Suds blinked at the gift while he fastened his helmet and clamped it. He seemed dazed. She held the bottle out to him and smiled hopefully. Suds accepted it absent-mindedly, nodded at her, and stepped into the airlock. The hatch slid closed.

Mme. d'Annecy started back toward her counting table. The alarm bell burst into a sudden brazen clamor. She looked back. A red warning signal flashed balefully. Henri burst in from the corridor, eyed the bell and the light, then charged toward the airlock. The gauge by the hatch showed zero pressure. He pressed a starter button, and a meter hummed to life. The pressure needle crept upward. The bell and the light continued a frenetic complaint. The motor stopped. Henri glanced at the gauge, then swung open the hatch. *"Allons! Ma foi, quelle merde!"*

Mme. d'Annecy came to peer around him into the small cubicle. Her subsequent shriek penetrated to the farthest corridors. Suds Brodanovitch had missed his last chance to become a stockholder.

"It wasn't yo' fault, Ma'am," said Lije Henderson a few minutes later as they half-led half-carried her to her compartment. "He know bettuh than to step outside with that bottle of booze. You didn't know. You couldn' be 'spected to know. But he been heah long enough to know —a man make one mistake, thass all. BLOOIE."

Blooie was too graphic to suit Madame; she sagged and began retching.

"C'mon, Ma'am, less get you in yo hammock." They carried her into her quarters, eased her into bed, and stepped back out on the catwalk.

Lije mopped his face, leaned against a tension member, and glanced at Joe. "Now how come you s'pose he had that bottle of fizzling giggle water up close to his helmet that way, Joe?"

"I don't know. Reading the label, maybe."

"He sho' muss have had something on his mine."

"Well, it's gone now."

"Yeah. BLOOIE. Man!"

Relke had led the girl out through the lock in the reactor nacelle in order to evade Brodanovitch and a possible command to return to camp. They sat in Novotny's runabout and giggled cozily together at the fuzzy map of Earth that floated in the darkness above them. On the ship's fuselage, the warning light over the airlock hatch began winking, indicating that the lock was in use. The girl noticed it and nudged him. She pointed at the light.

"Somebody coming out," Relke muttered. "Maybe Suds. We'd better get out of here." He flipped the main switch and started the motor. He was backing onto the road when Giselle caught his arm.

"Beel! Look at the light!"

He glanced around. It was flashing red.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Malfunction signal. Compressor trouble, probably. It's nothing. Let's take a ride. Joe won't care." He started backing again.

"*Poof!*" she said suddenly.

"What?"

"Poof. It opened, and *poof*—" She puckered her lips and blew a little puff of steam in the cold air to show him. "So. Like smoke."

He turned the car around in the road and looked back again. The hatch had closed. There was no one on the ladder. "Nobody came out."

"*Non.* Just poof."

He edged the car against the trolley rails, switched to autosteering, and let it gather speed.

"Beel?"

"Yeah, kid?"

"Where you taking me?"

He caught the note of alarm in her voice and slowed down again. She had come on a dare after several drinks, and the drinks were wearing off. The landscape was frighteningly alien, and the sense of falling into bottomlessness was ever-present.

"You want to go back?" he asked gloomily.

"I don't know. I don't like it out here."

"You said you wanted some ground under your feet."

"But it doesn't feel like ground when you walk on it."

"Rather be inside a building?"

She nodded eagerly.

"That's where we're going."

"To your camp?"

"God, no! I'm planning to keep you to myself."

She laughed and snuggled closer to him. "You can't. Madame d'Annecy will not permit—"

"Let's talk about something else," he grunted quickly.

"OK. Let's talk about Monday."

"Which Monday?"

"Next Monday. It's my birthday. When is it going to be Monday, Bill?"

"You said *Bill.*"

"Beel? That's your name, isn't eet? Weeliam Q. Relke, who weel not tell me what ees the *Q?*"

"But you said *Bill.*"

She was silent for a moment. "OK, I'm a phony," she muttered. "Does the inquisition start now?"

He could feel her tighten up, and he said nothing. She waited stiffly for a time. Gradually she relaxed against him again. "When's it going to be Monday?" she murmured.

"When's it going to be Monday where?"

"Here, anywhere, silly!"

He laughed. "When will it be Monday all over the universe?"

She thought for a moment. "Oh. Like time zones. OK, when will it be Monday here?"

"It won't. We just have periods, hitches, and shifts. Fifty shifts make a hitch, two hitches make a period. A period's from sunrise to sunrise. Twenty-nine and a half days. But we don't count days. So I don't know when it'll be Monday."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It seemed to alarm her. She sat up. "Don't you even have *hours?*" She looked at her watch and jiggled it, listened to it.

"Sure. Seven hours in a shift. *We* call them hours, anyhow. Forty-five seconds longer than an Earth hour."

She looked up through the canopy at the orb of Earth. "When it's Monday on Earth, it'll be Monday here too," she announced flatly.

Relke laughed. "OK, we'll call it that."

"So when will it start being Monday on Earth?"

"Well, it'll start at twenty-four different times, depending on where you are. Maybe more than twenty-four. It's August. Some places, they set the clocks ahead an hour in Summer."

She looked really worried.

"You take birthdays pretty seriously?" he asked.

"Only this one. I'll be—" She broke off and closed her mouth.

"Pick a time zone," Relke offered, "and I'll try to figure out how long until Monday starts. Which zone? Where you'd be now, maybe?"

She shook her head.

"Where you were born?"

"That would be—" She stopped again. "Never mind. Forget it." She sat brooding and watching the moonscape.

Relke turned off the road at the transformer station. He pulled up beside a flat-roofed cubicle the size of a sentrybox. Giselle looked at it in astonishment.

"*That's* a building?" she asked.

"That's an entrance. The 'building's' underground. Come on, let's seal up."

"What's down there?"

"Just a transformer vault and living quarters for a substation man."

"Somebody *lives* down there?"

"Not yet. The line's still being built. They'll move somebody in when the trolley traffic starts moving."

"What do we want to go down there for?"

He looked at her forlornly. "You'd rather go back to the ship?"

She seemed to pull herself together professionally. She laughed and put her arms around him and whispered something in French against his ear. She kissed him hard, pressed her forehead against his, and grinned. "C'mon, babee! Let's go downstairs."

Relke felt suddenly cold inside. He had wanted to see what it felt like to be alone with a woman again in a quiet place, away from the shouting howling revelry that had been going on aboard the ship. Now he knew what it was going to feel like. It was going to feel counterfeit. "Christ!" he grunted angrily. "Let's go back!" He reached roughly around her and cut on the switch again. She recoiled suddenly and gaped at him as he started the motor and turned the bug around.

"Hey!" She was staring at him oddly, as if seeing him for the first time.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Relke kept his face averted and his knuckles were white on the steering bar. She got up on her knees on the seat and put her hands on his shoulders. "Bill. Good Lord, you're *crying!*"

He choked out a curse as the bug hit the side of the cut and careened around on the approach to the road. He lost control, and the runabout went off the approach and slid slowly sideways down a gentle slope of crushed-lava fill. A sharp clanking sound came from the floor plates.

"Get your suit sealed!" he yelled. "Get it sealed!"

The runabout lurched to a sudden stop. The cabin pressure stayed up. He sat panting for a moment, then started the motor. He let it inch ahead and tugged at the steering bar. It was locked. The bug crept in an arc, and the clanking resumed. He cut off the motor and sat cursing softly.

"What's wrong?"

"Broke a link and the tread's fouled. We'll have to get out."

She glanced at him out of the corner of her eye. He was glowering. She looked back toward the sentrybox entrance to the substation and smiled thoughtfully.

It was chilly in the vault, and the only light came from the indicator lamps on the control board. The pressure gauge inside the airlock indicated only eight pounds of air. The construction crew had pumped it up to keep some convection currents going around the big transformers, but they hadn't planned on anyone breathing it soon. He changed the mixture controls, turned the barostat up to twelve pounds, and listened to the compressors start up. When he turned around, Giselle was taking off her suit and beginning to pant.

"*Hey,* stay in that thing!" he shouted.

His helmet muffled his voice, and she looked at him blankly. "*What?*" she called. She was gasping and looking around in alarm.

Relke sprinted a few steps to the emergency rack and grabbed a low pressure walk-around bottle. When he got back, she was getting blue and shaking her head drunkenly. He cracked the valve on the bottle and got the hose connection against her mouth. She nodded quickly and sucked on it. He went back to watch the gauges. He found the overhead lighting controls and turned them on. Giselle held her nose and anxiously sipped air from the bottle. He nodded reassuringly at her. The construction crews had left the substation filled with nitrogen-helium mixture, seeing no reason to add rust-producing moisture and oxygen until someone moved into the place; she had been breathing inert gases, nothing more.

When the partial oxygen pressure was up to normal, he left the control panel and went to look for the communicator. He found the equipment, but it was not yet tied into

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the line. He went back to tell the girl. Still sipping at the bottle, she watched him with attentive brown eyes. It was the gaze of a child, and he wondered about her age. Aboard ship, she and the others had seemed impersonal automata of Eros; painted ornaments and sleekly functional decoys designed to perform stereotyped rituals of enticement and excarnation of desire, swiftly, lest a customer be kept waiting. But here in stronger light, against a neutral background, he noticed suddenly that she was a distinct individual. Her lipstick had smeared. Her dark hair kept spilling out in tangled wisps from beneath a leather cap with fleece ear flaps. She wore a pair of coveralls, several sizes too large and rolled up about the ankles. With too much rouge on her solemnly mischievous face, she looked ready for a role in a girls' school version of *Chanticler*.

"You can stop breathing out of the can," he told her. "The oxygen pressure's okay now."

She took the hose from her mouth and sniffed warily. "What was the matter? I was seeing spots."

"It's all right now."

"It's cold in this place. Are we stuck here?"

"I tried to call Joe, but the set's not hooked up. He'll come looking for us."

"Isn't there any heat in here? Can't you start a fire?"

He glanced down at the big 5,000 kva transformers in the pit beyond the safety rail. The noise of corona discharge was very faint, and the purr of thirty-two cycle hum was scarcely audible. With no trucks drawing power from the trolley, the big pots were cold. Normally, eddy current and hysteresis losses in the transformers would keep the station toast-warm. He glanced at a thermometer. It read slightly under freezing: the ambient temperature of the subsurface rock in that region.

"Let's try the stationman's living quarters," he grunted. "They usually furnish them fancy, as bunk tanks go. Man has to stay by himself out here, they want to keep him sane."

A door marked PRIVATE flipped open as they approached it. A cheery voice called out: *"Hi, Bo. Rugged deal, ain't it?"*

Giselle started back in alarm. "Who's there?"

Relke chuckled. "Just a recorded voice. Back up, I'll show you."

They moved a few paces away. The door fell closed. They approached it again. This time a raucous female squawked at them: *"Whaddaya mean coming home at this hour? Lemme smell your breath."*

Giselle caught on and grinned. "So he won't get lonesome?"

"Partly, and partly to keep him a little sore. The stationmen hate it, but that's part of the idea. It gives them something to talk back to and throw things at."

They entered the apartment. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

door closed itself, the lights went on. Someone belched, then announced: *"I get just as sick of looking at you as you do looking at me, button head. Go take a bath."*

Relke flushed. "It can get pretty rough sometimes. The tapes weren't edited for mixed company. Better plug your ears if you go in the bathroom."

Giselle giggled. "I think it's cute."

He went into the kitchenette and turned on all the burners of the electric range to help warm the place. "Come stand next to the oven," he called, "until I see if the heat pumps are working." He opened the oven door. A libidinous purr came from within.

"Dah-ling, now why bother with breakfast when you can have meee?"

He glanced up at Giselle.

"*I* didn't say it," she giggled, but posed invitingly.

Relke grinned and accepted the invitation.

"You're not crying now," she purred as he released her.

He felt a surge of unaccountable fury, grunted, "Excuse me," and stalked out to the transformer vault. He looked around for the heat pumps, failed to find them, and went to lean on the handrail overlooking the pit. He stood there with his fists in his pockets, vaguely anguished and enraged, for no reason he understood. For a moment he had been too close to feeling at home, and that brought up the wrath somehow. After a couple of minutes he shook it off and went back inside.

"Hey, I wasn't teasing you," Giselle told him.

"What?"

"About crying."

"Listen," he said irritably, "did you ever see a looney or a spacer without leaky eyes? It's the glare, that's all."

"Is that it? Huh—want to know something? I can't cry. That's funny. You're a man and you can cry, but I can't."

Relke watched her grumpily while she warmed her behind at the oven. *She's not more than fifteen,* he decided suddenly. It made him a little queasy. *Come on, Joe, hurry.*

"You know," she went on absently, "when I was a little girl, I got mad at . . . at somebody, and I decided I was never going to cry anymore. I never did, either. And you know what?—now I can't. Sometimes I try and I try, but I just *can't.*" She spread her hands to the oven, tilted them back and forth, and watched the way the tendons worked as she stiffened her fingers. She seemed to be talking to her hands. "Once I used an onion. To cry, I mean. I cut an onion and rubbed some of it on a handkerchief and laid the handkerchief over my eyes. I cried that time, all right. That time I couldn't stop crying, and nobody could make me stop. They were petting me and scolding me and shaking me and trying to give me smelling salts, but I just

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

couldn't quit. I blubbered for two days. Finally Mother Bernarde had to call the doctor to give me a sedative. Some of the sisters were taking cold towels and—"

"Sisters?" Relke grunted.

Giselle clapped a hand to her mouth and shook her head five or six times, very rapidly. She looked around at him. He shrugged.

"So you were in a convent."

She shook her head again.

"So what if you were?" He sat down with his back to her and pretended to ignore her. She was dangerously close to that state of mind which precedes the telling of a life history. He didn't want to hear it; he already knew it. So she was in a nunnery; Relke was not surprised. Some people had to polarize themselves. If they broke free from one pole, they had to seek its opposite. People with no middle ground. Black, or if not black, then white, never gray. Law, or criminality. God, or Satan. The cloister, or a whorehouse. Eternally a choice of all or nothing-at-all, and they couldn't see that they made things that way for themselves. They set fire to every bridge they ever crossed —so that even a cow creek became a Rubicon, and every crossing was on a tightrope.

You understand that too well, don't you, Relke? he asked himself bitterly. There was Fran and the baby, and there wasn't enough money, and so you had to go and burn a bridge—a 240,000-mile bridge, with Fran on the other side. And so, after six years on Luna, there would be enough money; but there wouldn't be Fran and the baby. And so, he had signed another extended contract, and the moon was going to be home for a long long time. *Yeh, you know about burned bridges, all right, Relke.*

He glanced at Giselle. She was glaring at him.

"If you're waiting for me to say something," she snapped, "you can stop waiting. I don't have to tell you anything."

"I didn't ask you anything."

"I was just a novice. I didn't take permanent vows."

"All *right.*"

"They wouldn't let me. They said I was—unstable. They didn't think I had a calling."

"Well, you've got one now. Stop crawling all over me like I said anything. I didn't ask you any questions."

"You gave me that pious look."

"Oh, garbage!" He rolled out of the chair and loped off to the room. The stationman's quarters boasted its own music system and television (permanently tuned to the single channel that broadcast a fairly narrow beam aimed at the lunar stations). He tried the television first, but solar interference was heavy.

"Maybe it'll tell us when it's going to be Monday," she said, coming to watch him from the doorway.

He gave her a sharp look, then softened it. The stove had warmed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the kitchen, and she had stepped out of the baggy coveralls. She was still wearing the yellow dress, and she had taken a moment to comb her hair. She leaned against the side of the doorway, looking very young but excessively female. She had that lost pixie look and a tropical climate tan too.

"Why are you looking at me that way?" she asked. "Is this all we're going to do? I mean, just wait around until somebody comes? Can't we dance or something?" She did a couple of skippity steps away from the door jamb and rolled her hips experimentally. One hip was made of India rubber. "Say! Dancing ought to be fun in this crazy gravity." She smirked at him and posed alluringly.

Relke swallowed, reddened, and turned to open the selector cabinet. *She's only a kid, Relke.* He paused, then dialed three selections suitable for dancing. *She's only a kid, damn it!* He paused again, then dialed a violin concerto. *A kid—back home they'd call her "jail bait."* He dialed ten minutes' worth of torrid Spanish guitar. *You'll hate yourself for it, Relke.* He shuddered involuntarily, dialed one called *The Satyricon of Lily Brown, an orgy in New African Jazz (for adults only).*

He glanced up guiltily. She was already whirling around the room with an imaginary partner, dancing to the first selection.

Relke dialed a tape of Palestrina and some plainchant, but left it for last. Maybe it would neutralize the rest.

She snuggled close and they tried to keep time to the music—not an easy task, with the slow motion imposed by low gravity mismatched to the livelier rhythms of dancing on Earth. Two attempts were enough. Giselle flopped down on the bunk.

"What's that playing now, Bill?"

"Sibelius. Concerto for Something and Violin. I dunno."

"Bill?"

"Yeah."

"Did I make you mad or something?"

"No, but I don't think—" He turned to look at her and stopped talking. She was lying on her back with her hands behind her head and her legs cocked up, balancing her calf on her other knee and watching her foot wiggle. She was lithe and brown and . . . ripe.

"Damn," he muttered.

"Bill?"

"Uh?"

She wrinkled her nose at him and smiled. "Don't you even know what you wanted to come over here for?"

Relke got up slowly and walked to the light switch. He snapped it.

"Oh, dahling!" said a new voice in the darkness. *"What if my husband comes home!"*

After Sibelius came the Spanish guitar. The African jazz was wasted.

Relke sat erect with a start. Giselle still slept, but noises came from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other room. There were voices, and a door slammed closed. Shuffling footsteps, a muffled curse. "Who's there?" he yelled. "Joe?"

The noises stopped, but he heard the hiss of someone whispering. He nudged the girl awake with one elbow. The record changer clicked, and the soft chant of an *Agnus Dei* came from the music system.

"Oh, God! It's Monday!" Giselle muttered sleepily.

"A dame," grunted a voice in the next room.

"Who's there?" Relke called again.

"We brought you some company." The voice sounded familiar. A light went on in the other room. "Set him down over here, Harv."

Relke heard rattling sounds and a chair scraped back. They dumped something into the chair. Then the bulky silhouette of a man filled the doorway. "Who's in here, anyhow?" He switched on the lights. The man was Larkin. Giselle pulled a blanket around herself and blinked sleepily.

"Is it Monday?" she asked.

A slow grin spread across Larkin's face. "Hey Harv!" he called over his shoulder. "Look what we pulled out of the grab bag! Come look at lover boy. . . . Now, Harv—is that sweet? Is that romantic?"

Kunz looked over Larkin's shoulder. "Yuh. Real homey, ain't it. Hiyah, Rat. Lookit that cheese he's got with him. Some cheese. Round like a provolone, huh? Hiyah, cheesecake, know you're in bed with a rat?"

Giselle glanced questioningly at Relke. Relke was surveying the tactical situation. It looked unpromising. Larkin laughed.

"Look at him, Harv—wondering where he left his shiv. What's the matter, Relke? We make you nervous?" He stepped inside, Kunz followed.

Relke stood up in bed and backed against the wall. "Get out of the way," he grunted at Giselle.

"Look at him!" Larkin gloated. "Getting ready to kick. You planning to kick somebody, sonny?"

"Stay back!" he snapped. "Get out of here, Giselle!"

"A l'abri? Oui—" She slid off the bed and darted for the door. Kunz grabbed at her, but she slipped past. She stopped in the doorway and backed up a step. She stared into the next room. She put her hand to her mouth. "Oh! *Oh!"* she yelped. Larkin and Kunz glanced back at her. Relke lunged off the bed. He smashed against Larkin, sent him sprawling into Kunz. He dodged Giselle and sprinted for the kitchen and the cutlery rack. He made it a few steps past the door before he saw what Giselle had seen. Something was sitting at the table, facing the door. Relke stopped in his tracks and began backing away. The something at the table was a blistered caricature of a man, an icy frost-figure in a deflated pressure suit. Its mouth was open, and the stomach had been forced up through . . . He closed his eyes. Relke had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seen men blown out, but it hadn't gotten any pleasanter to look at since the last time.

"Get him, Harv!"

They pinned his arms from behind. "Heading for a butcher knife, Relke?" He heard a dull crack and felt his head explode. The room went pink and hazy.

"That's for grabbing glass on us the other day, Sonny."

"Don't mess him up too much, Lark. The dame's here."

"I won't mess him up. I'll be real clean about it."

The crack came again, and the pink haze quivered with black flashes.

"That's for ratting on the Party, Relke."

Dimly he heard Giselle screaming at them to stop it.

"Take that little bitch in the other room and play house with her, Harv. I'll work on Sonny awhile, and then we'll trade around. Don't wear her out."

"Let go," she yelled. "Take your hands off—listen, I'll go in there with you if you'll quit beating him. Now stop—"

Another crack. The pink haze flew apart, and blackness engulfed him. Time moved ahead in jerks for awhile. First he was sitting at the table across from the corpse. Larkin was there too, dealing himself a hand of solitaire. Loud popular music blared from the music system, but he could hear Kunz laughing in the next room. Once Giselle's voice cried out in protest. Relke moved and groaned. Larkin looked his way.

"Hey, Harv—he's awake. It's your turn."

"I'm busy," Kunz yelled.

"Well, hurry up. Brodanovitch is beginning to thaw."

Relke blinked at the dead man. "Who? Him? Brodan—" His lips were swollen, and it was painful to talk.

"Yeah, that's Suds. Pretty, isn't he? You're going to look like that one of these days, kid."

"You—killed—Suds?"

Larkin threw back his head and laughed. "Hey, Harv, hear that? He thinks we killed Suds."

"What happened to him, then?"

Larkin shrugged. "He walked into an airlock with a bottle of champagne. The pressure went down quick, the booze blew up in his face, and there sits Suds. A victim of imprudence, like you. Sad looking schlemazel, isn't he?"

"Wha'd you bring him here for?"

"You know the rules, Sonny. A man gets blown out, they got to look him over inch by inch, make sure it wasn't murder."

Giselle cried out again in protest. Relke started to his feet, staggering dizzily. Larkin grabbed him and pushed him down.

"Hey, Harv! He's getting frisky. Come take over. The gang'll be rolling in pretty quick."

Kunz came out of the bunkroom. Larkin sprinted for the door as Gi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

selle tried to make a run for it. He caught her and dragged her back. He pushed her into the bunkroom, went in after her, and closed the door. Relke lunged at Kunz, but a judo cut knocked numbness into the side of his neck and sent him crashing against the wall.

"Relke, get wise," Harv growled. "This'll happen every now and then if you don't join up."

The lineman started to his feet. Kunz kicked him disinterestedly. Relke groaned and grabbed his side.

"We got no hard feelings, Relke. . . ." He chopped his boot down against the back of Relke's neck. "You can join the Party any time."

Time moved ahead in jerks again.

Once he woke up. Brodanovitch was beginning to melt, and the smell of brandy filled the room. There were voices and chair scrapings and after a while somebody carried Brodanovitch out. Relke lay with his head against the wall and kept his eyes closed. He assumed that if the apartment contained a friend, he would not still be lying here on the floor; so he remained motionless and waited to gather strength.

"So that's about the size of it," Larkin was telling someone. "Those dames are apt to be dynamite if they let them into Crater City. We've got enough steam whipped up to pull off the strike, but what if that canful of cat meat walks in on Copernicus about sundown? Who's going to have their mind on politics?"

"Hell, Lark," grunted a strange voice. "Parkeson'll never let them get in town."

"No? Don't be too damn sure. Parkeson's no idiot. He knows trouble's coming. Hell, he could *invite* them to Crater City, pretend he's innocent as a lamb, just didn't know what they are, but take credit for them being there."

"Well, what can we do about it?"

"Cripple that ship."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Cripple the ship. Look, there's nothing else we can do on our own. We've got no orders from the Party. Right before we break camp, at sundown, we cripple the ship. Something they can't fix without help from the base."

"Leave them *stuck* out here?"

"Only for a day or two. Till the Party takes over the base. Then *we* send a few wagons out here after dark and pick up the wenches. Who gets credit for dames showing up? The Party. Besides, it's the only thing we dare do without orders. We can't be sure what'd happen if Parkeson walked in with a bunch of Algerian whores about the time the show's supposed to start. And says, 'Here, boys, look what Daddy brought.'"

"Parkeson hasn't got the guts."

"The hell he hasn't. He'd say *that* out of one side of his mouth. Out of the other side, he'd be dictating a vigorous protest to the WP for allowing such things to get clearance for blasting off, making it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sound like they're at fault. That's just a guess. We've got to keep those women out of Crater City until we're sure, though. And there's only one way: cripple the ship."

There were five or six voices in the discussion, and Relke recognized enough of them to understand dimly that a cell meeting was in progress. His mind refused to function clearly, and at times the voices seemed to be speaking in senseless jargon, although the words were plain enough. His head throbbed and he had bitten a piece out of the end of his tongue. He felt as if he were lying stretched out on a bed of jagged rocks, although there was only the smooth floor under his battered person.

Giselle cried out from the next room and beat angrily on the door.

Quite mindlessly, and as if his body were being directed by some whimsical puppet master, Relke's corpse suddenly clambered to its feet and addressed itself to the startled conspirators.

"Goddam it, gentlemen, can't you let the lady out to use the crapper?"

They hit him over the head with a jack handle.

He woke up again. This time he was in the bunkroom. A faint choking sound made him look up. Giselle sat on the foot of the bed, legs tightly crossed, face screwed up. She was trying to cry.

"Use an onion," he told her thickly, and sat up. "What's the matter?"

"It's Monday now."

"Where are they?"

"They left. We're locked in."

He fell back with a groan. A stitch in his side felt like a broken rib. He turned his face to the wall. "What's so great about Monday?" he muttered.

"Today the others are taking their vows."

When he woke up again, Novotny was watching him from the foot of the bed. The girl was gone. He sat up and fell back with a groan.

"Fran," he said.

"It wasn't Fran, it was a hustler," said Joe. "I had Beasley take her back. Who busted you?"

"Larkin and Kunz."

"It's a good thing."

"What?"

"They saved me the trouble. You ran off with the jeep."

"Sorry."

"You don't have to be sorry. Just watch yourself, that's all."

"I wanted to see what it was like, Joe."

"What? Playing house with a wench?"

He nodded.

"What was it like?"

"I don't know."

"You woke up calling her Fran."

"I did?"

"Yah. Before you start feeling that way, you better ask Beasley what they did together on the rug while you were asleep, Romeo."

"What?"

"She really knows some tricks. Mme. d'Annecy really educates her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

girls. You been kissing and cooing with her, Relke?"

"I'm sick, Joe. Don't."

"By the way, you better not go back. The Madame's pretty sore at you."

"Why?"

"For keeping the wench gone so long. There was going to be a show. You know, a circus. Giselle was supposed to be in it. You might say she had the lead role."

"Who?"

"Giselle. Still feel like calling her Fran?—Hey! if you're going to vomit, get out of bed."

Relke staggered into the latrine. He was gone a long time.

"Better hurry up," Novotny called. "Our shift goes on in half an hour."

"I can't go on, Joe."

"The hell you can't. Unless you want to be sent up N.L.D. You know what they do to N.L.D. cases."

"You wouldn't report me N.L.D."

"The hell I wouldn't, but I don't have to."

"What do you mean?"

"Parkeson's coming, with a team of inspectors. They're probably already here, and plenty sore."

"About the ship? The women?"

"I don't know. If the Commission hear about those bats, there'll be hell to pay. But who'll pay it is something else."

Relke buried his face in his hands and tried to think. "Joe, listen. I only half remember, but . . . there was a cell meeting here."

"When?"

"After Larkin and Kunz worked me over. Some guys came in, and . . ."

"Well?"

"It's foggy. Something about Parkeson taking the women back to Crater City."

"Hell, that's a screwy idea. Who thinks that?"

Relke shook his head and tried to think. He came out of the latrine mopping his face on a towel. "I'm trying to remember."

Joe got up. "All right. Better get your suit. Let's go pull cable."

The lineman breathed deeply a few times and winced at the effect. He went to get his suit out of the hangar, started the routine safety check, and stopped halfway through. "Joe, my suit's been cut."

Novotny came to look. He pinched the thick corded plastic until the incision opened like a mouth. "Knife," he grunted.

"Those sons of—"

"Yah." He fingered the cut. "They meant for you to find it, though. It's too conspicuous. It's a threat."

"Well, I'm fed up with their threats. I'm going to—"

"You're not going to do anything, Relke. *I'm* going to do it. Larkin and Kunz have messed around with my men one time too often."

"What have you got in mind, Joe?"

"Henderson and I will handle it. We'll go over and have a little conference with them, that's all."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Why Henderson? Look, Joe, if you're going to stomp them, it's *my* grudge, not Lije's."

"That's just it. If I take you, it's a grudge. If Lije and I do it, it's just politics. I've told you guys before—leave the politics to me. Come on, we'll get you a suit from the emergency locker."

They went out into the transformer vault. Two men wearing blue armbands were bending over Brodanovitch's corpse. One of them was fluently cursing unknown parties who had brought the body to a warm place and allowed it to thaw.

"Investigating team," Novotny muttered. "Means Parkeson is already here." He hiked off toward the emergency lockers.

"Hey, are you the guy that left this stiff near a stove?" one of the investigators called out to Relke.

"No, but I'll be glad to rat on the guys that did, if it'll get them in trouble," the lineman told him.

"Never mind. You can't hang them for being stupid."

"What are you going to do with *him?*" Relke asked, nodding at the corpse.

"Promote him to supervisory engineer and give him a raise."

"Christ but they hire smart boys for the snooper team, don't they? What's your I.Q., friend? I bet they had to breed you to get you smart."

The checker grinned. "You looking for an argument, Slim?"

Relke shook his head. "No, I just asked a question."

"We're going to take him back to Copernicus and bury him, friend. It takes a lot of imagination to figure that out, doesn't it?"

"If he was a class three laborer, you wouldn't take him back to Copernicus. You wouldn't even bury him. You'd just chuck him in a fissure and dynamite the lip."

The man smiled. Patient cynicism was in his tone. "But he's *not* a class three laborer, Slim. He's Mister S. K. Brodanovitch. Does that make everything nice and clear?"

"Sure. Is Parkeson around?"

The checker glanced up and snickered. "You're a chum of his, I guess? Hear that, Clyde? We're talking to a wheel."

Relke reddened. "Shove it, chum. I just wondered if he's here."

"Sure, he's out here. He went over to see that flying bordello you guys have been hiding out here."

"What's he going to do about it?"

"Couldn't say, friend."

Novotny came back with an extra suit.

"Joe, I just remembered something."

"Tell me about it on the way back."

They suited up and went out to the runabout. Relke told what he could remember about the cell meeting.

"It sounds crazy in a way," Novotny said thoughtfully. "Or maybe it doesn't. It *could* mess up the Party's strike plans if Parkeson brought those women back before

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sundown. The men want women back on the moon project. If they can get women bootlegged in, they won't be quite so ready to start a riot on the No Work Without a Wife theme."

"But Parkeson'd get fired in a flash if—"

"If Parliament got wind of it, sure. Unless he raised the squawk later himself. UCOJE doesn't mention prostitution. Parkeson could point out that some national codes on Earth tolerate it. Nations with delegates in the Parliament, and with work teams on the moon. Take the African team at Tycho. And the Japanese team. Parkeson himself is an Aussie. Whose law is he supposed to enforce?"

"You mean maybe they can't keep ships like that from visiting us?"

"Don't kid yourself. It won't last long. But maybe long enough. If it goes on long enough, and builds up, the general public will find out. You think that wouldn't cause some screaming back home?"

"Yeah. That'll be the end."

"I'm wondering. If there turns out to be a profit in it for whoever's backing d'Annecy, well—anything that brings a profit is pretty hard to put a stop to. There's only one sure way to stop it. Kill the demand."

"For women? Are you crazy, Joe?"

"They could bring in decent women. Women to marry. That'll stop it."

"But the kids. They can't have kids."

"Yeah, I know. That's the problem, and they've got to start solving it sometime. Hell, up to now, they haven't been trying to solve it. When the problem came up, and the kids were dying, everybody got hysterical and jerked the women back to Earth. That wasn't a solution, it was an evasion. The problem is growth-control—in low gravity. It ought to have a medical answer. If this d'Annecy dame gets a chance to keep peddling her wares under the counter, well—she'll force them to start looking for a solution."

"I don't know, Joe. Everybody said homosexuality would force them to start looking for it—after Doc Reiber made his survey. The statistics looked pretty black, but they didn't do anything about it except send us a shipful of ministers. The fairies just tried to make the ministers."

"Yeah, but this is different."

"I don't see how."

"Half the voters are women."

"So? They didn't do anything about homosex—"

"Relke, wise up. Listen, did you ever see a couple of Lesbians necking in a bar?"

Relke snickered. "Sure, once or twice."

"How did you feel about it?"

"Well, this once was kind of funny. You see, this one babe had on—"

"Never mind. You thought it was funny. Do you think it's funny the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way MacMillian and Wickers bill and coo?"

"That gets pretty damn nauseating, Joe."

"Uh-huh, but the Lesbians just gave you a giggle. Why?"

"Well, I don't know, Joe, it's—"

"I'll tell you why. You like dames. You can understand other guys liking dames. You like dames so much that you can even understand two dames liking each other. You can see what they see in each other. But it's incongruous, so it's funny. But you *can't* see what two fairies see in each other, so that just gives you a bellyache. Isn't that it?"

"Maybe, but what's that got to do with the voters?"

"Ever think that maybe a woman would feel the same way in reverse? A dame could see what MacMillian and Wickers see in each other. The dame might morally disapprove, but at the same time she could sympathize. What's more, she'd be plenty sure that she could handle that kind of competition if she ever needed to. She's a woman, and wotthehell, Wickers is only a substitute woman. It wouldn't worry her too much. Worry her morally, but not as a personal threat. Relke, Mme d'Annecy's racket is a personal threat to the home girl and the womenfolk."

"I see what you mean."

"Half the voters are women."

Relke chuckled. "Migod, Joe, if Ellen heard about that ship . . ."

"Ellen?"

"My older sister. Old maid. Grim."

"You've got the idea. If Parkeson thinks of all this . . ." His voice trailed off. "When is Larkin talking about crippling that ship?"

"About sundown, why?"

"Somebody better warn the d'Annecy dame."

The cosmic gunfire had diminished. The Perseid shrapnel still pelted the dusty face of the plain, but the gram-impact-per-acre-second had dropped by a significant fraction, and with it fell the statistician's estimate of dead men per square mile. There was an ion storm during the first half of B-shift, and the energized spans of high voltage cable danced with fluttering demon light as the trace-pressure of the lunar "atmosphere" increased enough to start a glow discharge between conductors. High current surges sucked at the line, causing the breakers to hiccup. The breakers tried the line three times, then left the circuit dead and waited for the storm to pass. The storm meant nothing to the construction crews except an increase in headset noise.

Parkeson's voice came drawling on the general call frequency, wading waist-deep through the interference caused by the storm. Relke leaned back against his safety strap atop the trusswork of the last tower and tried to listen. Parkeson was reading the Articles of Discipline, and listening was compulsory. All teams on the job had stopped work to hear him. Relke gazed across the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plain toward the slender nacelles of the bird from Algiers in the distance. He had gotten used to the ache in his side where Kunz had kicked him, but it was good to rest for a time and watch the rocket and remember brown legs and a yellow dress. Properties of Earth. Properties belonging to the communion of humanity, from which fellowship a Looney was somehow cut off by 238,000 miles of physical separation.

"We've got a job to finish here," Parkeson was telling the men.

Why? What was in space that was worth the wanting? What followed from its conquest? What came of finishing the job?

Nothing.

Nothing.

Nothing. Nothing anybody ever dreamed of or hoped for.

Parkeson scolded on. *"I know the question that's foremost in your minds,"* his voice continued, *"but you'd better forget it. Let me tell you what happens if this line isn't finished by sundown.* (But by God, it *will* be finished!) *Listen, you wanted women. All right, now you've all been over to visit the uh—'affectionate institution'—and you got what you wanted; and now the work is behind schedule. Who gives a damn about the project, eh? I know what you're thinking. 'That's Parkeson's worry.' OK, so let's talk about what you're going to breathe for the next couple of periods. Let's talk about how many men will wind up in the psycho-respiratory ward, about the overload on the algae tanks. That's not your responsibility either, is it? You don't* have *to breathe and eat. Hell, let Nature take care of air and water, eh? Sure. Now look around. Take a good look. All that's between you and that hungry vacuum out there is ten pounds of man-made air and a little reinforced plastic. All that keeps you eating and drinking and breathing is that precarious life-cycle of ours at Copernicus. That plant-animal feedback loop is so delicately balanced that the biology team gets the cold shakes every time somebody sneezes or passes gas. It has to be constantly nursed. It has to be planned and kept on schedule. On Earth, Nature's a plenum. You can chop down her forests, kill off her deer and buffalo, and fill her air with smog and hot isotopes; the worst you can do is cause a few new deserts and dust bowls, and make things a little unpleasant for a while.*

"Up here, we've got a little bit of Nature cooped up in a bottle, and we're in the bottle too. We're cultured like mold on agar. The biology team has to chart the ecology for months in advance. It has to know the construction and survey teams are going to deliver exactly what they promise to deliver, and do it on schedule. If you don't deliver, the ecology gets sick. If the ecology gets sick, you get sick.

"Do you want another epidemic of the chokers like we had three

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

years back? That's what'll happen if there's a work slowdown while everybody goes off on a sex binge at that ship. If the line isn't finished before sundown, the ecology gets bled for another two weeks to keep that mine colony going, and the colony can't return wastes to our cycle. Think it over, but think fast. There's not much time. 'We all breathe the same air'—on Earth, that's just a political slogan. Here, we all breathe it or we all choke in it. How do you want it, men?"

Relke shifted restlessly on the tower. He glanced down at Novotny and the others who lounged around the foot of the steel skeleton listening to Parkeson. Lije caught his eye. He waved at Relke to haul up the hoist-bucket. Relke shook his head and gave him a thumbs-down. Henderson gestured insistently for him to haul it up. Relke reeled the bucket in. It was empty, but chalked on the sides and bottom was a note from Lije: "They toll me what L and K did to you and yr girl. I and Joe will take care of it, right after this sermon. You can spit on my fist first if you want. Lije."

Relke gave him a half-hearted screw-twist signal and let the bucket go. Revenge was no good, and vicarious revenge was worse than no good; it was hollow. He thought of asking Joe to forget it, but he knew Joe wouldn't listen. The pusher felt his own integrity was involved, and a matter of jurisdictional ethics: nobody can push my men around but me. It was gang ethics, but it seemed inevitable somehow. Where there was fear, men huddled in small groups and counted their friends on their fingers, and all else was Foe. In the absence of the family, there had to be the gang, and fear made it quarrelsome, jealous, and proud.

Relke leaned back against his strap and glanced up toward Earth. The planet was between quarter and half phase, for the sun was lower in the west. He watched it and tried to feel something more than a vague envy. Sometimes the heartsick nostalgia reached the proportions of idolatrous adoration of Gaea's orb overhead, only to subside into a grudging resentment of the gulf between worlds. Earth—it was a place where you could stop being afraid, a place where fear of suffocation was not, where fear of blowout was not, where nobody went berserk with the chokers or dreamed of poisoned air or worried about shorthorn cancer or burn blindness or meteoric dust or low-gravity muscular atrophy. A place where there was wind to blow your sweat away.

Watching her crescent, he felt again that vague anger of separation, that resentment against those who stayed at home, who had no cause for constant fear, who could live without the tense expectancy of sudden death haunting every moment. One of them was Fran, and another was the one who had taken her from him. He looked away quickly and tried to listen to the coordinator.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"This is no threat," Parkeson was saying. *"If the line isn't finished on time, then the consequences will just happen, that's all. Nobody's going to punish you, but there are a few thousand men back at the Crater who have to breathe air with you. If they have to breathe stink next period—because you guys were out having one helluva party with Madame d'Annecy's girls—you can figure how popular you'll be. That's all I've got to say. There's still time to get the work back on schedule. Let's use it."*

Parkeson signed off. The new engineer who was replacing Brodanovitch gave them a brief pep-talk, implying that Parkeson was a skunk and would be forced to eat his own words before sundown. It was the old hard-guy-soft-guy routine: first a bawling-out and then a buttering-up. The new boss offered half of his salary to the first team to forge ahead of its own work schedule. It was not stated nor even implied that Parkeson was paying him back.

The work was resumed. After half an hour, the saftey beeper sounded on all frequencies, and men switched back to general call. Parkeson and his party were already heading back toward Copernicus.

"Blasting operation at the next tower site will occur in ten minutes," came the announcement. *"Demol team requests safety clearance over all of zones two and three, from four forty to five hundred hours. There will be scatter-glass in both zones. Zone two is to be evacuated immediately, and all personnel in zone three take line-of-sight cover from the red marker. I repeat: there will be scatter-glass . . ."*

"That's us," said Novotny when it was over. "Everybody come on. Brax, Relke, climb down."

Braxton swore softly in a honeysuckle drawl. It never sounded like cursing, which it wasn't, but like a man marveling at the variety of vicissitudes invented by an ingenious universe for the bedevilment of men. "I sweah, when the angels ahn't shootin' at us from up in Perseus, it's the demol boys. Demol says froggie, and eve'body jumps. It gives 'em that suhtain feelin' of impohtance. Y'all know what I think? I got a thee-orry. I think weah all really dead, and they don' tell us it's hell weah in, because not tellin' us is paht of the tohture."

"Get off the damn frequency, Brax, and stay off!" Novotny snapped when the Alabaman released his mic button. "I've told you and Henderson before—either learn to talk fast, or don't talk on the job. If somebody had a slow leak, he'd be boiling blood before he could scream—with you using the frequency for five minutes to say 'yeah.'"

"Mistuh Novotny! My mothuh always taught me to speak slowly and de-stinct-ly. If you think that yo' Yankee upbringin' . . ."

Joe rapped on his helmet until he shut up, then beckoned to Hender-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

son. "Lije, we got twenty minutes."

"Yeah, Joe, want to go see a couple of guys now?" He flashed white teeth and stared back toward the barrack train.

"Think we can handle it in twenty minutes?"

"I don' know. It seem like a short time to do a real good job of it, but maybe if we don't waste any on preliminary fisticuffin' . . ."

"Hell, they didn't waste any ceremony on Relke."

"Less go, then!" He grinned at Relke and held out his fist. "Spit on it?"

Relke shook his head. Henderson laughed. "Wanted to see if you'd go ptooey in your helmet."

"Come on, Lije. The rest of you guys find cover."

Relke watched the two of them lope off toward the rolling barracks. "Hey, Joe," he called after a few seconds.

The lopers stopped to look back. "Relke?"

"Yeah. Don't lose."

"What?"

"They'll say I sicced you. Don't lose."

"Don't worry." They loped again. The longer Relke watched them, the less he liked the idea. If they didn't do a pretty thorough job on Kunz and Larkin, things would be worse for Relke than if they did nothing at all. Then there was the movement to think about; he didn't know to what extent *they* looked out for their own.

Relke walked out of the danger zone and hiked across the hill where he could get a clear view of the rocket. He stopped for a while on the slope and watched four distant figures moving around on the ground beneath the towering ship. For a moment, he thought they were women, but then he saw that one of them was coiling mooring cable, and he knew they were ship's crew. What sort of men had the d'Annecy women been able to hire for such a job? he wondered.

He saw that they were getting ready to lift ship. *Lift ship!*

Relke was suddenly running toward them without knowing why. Whenever he topped a rise of ground and could see them, he tried calling them, but they were not using the project's suit frequency. Finally he found their voices on the seldom used private charter band, but they were speaking French.

One of the men looped a coil of cable over his shoulder and started up the ladder toward the lock. Relke stopped atop an outcropping. He was still two or three miles from the ship. The "isobar" valve system for the left knee of his suit had jammed, and it refused to take up the increased pressure caused by flexure. It was like trying to bend a fully inflated rubber tire, and he hobbled about for a moment with one leg stiff as a crutch.

"Listen!" he called on the p.c. frequency. "You guys at the ship. Can you hear me?" He was panting, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he felt a little panicky. The man on the ladder stopped climbing and looked around.

There was a staccato exchange in French.

"No, no! Over here. On the rock." He waved at them and jumped a few times. "Look toward the camp. On the rock."

They conversed heatedly among themselves for a time.

"Don't any of you speak English?" he begged.

They were silent for a moment. "Whoevair ees?" one of them ventured. "You conversation with wrong radio, M'sieur. Switch a button."

"No, no. I'm trying to call you . . ."

A carrier drowned him out.

"We close for business," the man said. "We go now." He started climbing again.

"Listen!" Relke yelled. "Ten thousand dollars. Everything."

"You crazy man."

"Look, it won't get you in any trouble. I've got plenty in the bank. I'll pay—"

The carrier cut him off again.

"You crazy. Get off the air. We do not go to Earth now."

"Wait! Listen! Tell Giselle . . . No, let me talk to her. Get her to use the radio. It's important."

"I tell you, we close for business now." The man climbed in the airlock. The others climbed up behind. They were jeering at him. This time it sounded like Arabic. He watched until they were all inside.

White fury lanced the ground and spread in a white sheet beneath the ship and roiled up in a tumult of dust and expanding gasses. It climbed on a white fan, gathering velocity. Relke could still make it out as a ship when its course began arcing away from the vertical. It was beginning a trajectory in the direction of Copernicus. When it was out of sight, he began trudging back toward the work site. He was nearly an hour overdue.

"Where you been?" Novotny asked him quietly after watching him hobble the last quarter of a mile in stony silence. He was squinting at the lineman with that faintly puzzled look that Relke recognized as a most ominous omen. The squint was lopsided because of a cut under one eye, and it looked like a chip was missing from a tooth.

Relke showed his stiff leg and bounced the heel against the ground a couple of times. "I walked too far, and the c.p. valves got jammed. Sorry, Joe."

"You don't have to be sorry. Let's see."

The pusher satisfied himself that the suit was malfunctioning. He waved the lineman toward the barrack train. "Go to supply and get it fixed. Get back on the double. You've slowed us down."

Relke paused. "You sore, Joe?"

"We're on duty. I don't get sore on duty. I save it up. Now—haul ass!"

Relke hobbled off. "What about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

. . . what you went for, Joe?" he called back. "What happened?"

"I told you to keep your nose out of politics!" the pusher snapped. "Never mind what happened."

Joe, Relke decided, was plenty sore. About something. Maybe about a beating that backfired. Maybe about Relke taking an hour awol. Either way, he was in trouble. He thought it over and decided that paying a bootleg ship ten thousand to take him back to Earth with them hadn't been such a hysterical whim after all.

But then he met Larkin in the supply wagon. Larkin was stretched out flat on his back, and a medic kept saying, "Who did it to you? Who did it to you?" and Larkin kept telling him to go to hell out of a mouth that looked like a piece of singed stew meat. Kunz was curled up on a blanket and looked even worse. He spat in his sleep and a bit of tooth rattled across the deck.

"Meanest bunch of bastards I ever saw," the clerk told Relke while he checked in the suit. "They don't even give you a chance. Here were these two guys sleeping in their bunks and not bothering anybody, and what do you think?"

"I quit thinking. What?"

"Somebody starts working them over. Wham. Don't even wake them up first. Just wham. You ever see anything like it? Mean, John, just mean. You can't even get a shift's sleep anymore. You better go to bed with a knife in your boot, John."

"It's Bill."

"Oh. What do you suppose makes a guy that mean anyway?"

"I don't know. Everybody's jumpy, I guess."

The clerk looked at him wisely. "There you have put your finger on it, John. Looney nerves. The jitters. Everybody's suit-happy." He leaned closer and lowered his voice. "You know how I tell when the camp's getting jittery?"

"Listen, check me out a suit. I've got to get back to the line."

"Now wait, this'll surprise you. I can tell better than the psych checkers when everybody's going on a slow panic. It's the sleeping bag liners."

"What?"

"The bed wetters, John. You'd be surprised how many grown men turn bed wetters about the middle of a hitch. At first, nobody. Then somebody gets killed on the line. The bag liners start coming in for cleaning. By the end of the hitch, the wash tank smells like a public lavatory, John. Not just the men, either. Some of the engineers. You know what I'm doing?"

"Look, Mack, the suit . . ."

"Not Mack. Frank. Look, I'll show you the chart." He got out a sheet of paper with a crudely drawn graph on it. "See how it goes? The peak? I've done ten of them."

"Why?"

The clerk looked at him blankly. "For the idea box, John. Didn't you know about the prizes? Doctor Es-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

terhall ought to be glad to get information like this."

"Christ, they'll give you a medal, Charley. Now give me my damn suit before I get it myself. I'm due on the line."

"OK, OK. You got the jitters yourself, haven't you?" He went to get the suit. "I just happened to think," he called back. "If you've been turning in liners yourself, don't worry about me. I don't keep names, and I don't remember faces."

"You blab plenty, though," Relke grumbled to himself.

The clerk heard him. "No call to get sore, John."

"I'm not sore, I'm just in a hurry. If you want to beg for a stomping, it's nothing to me."

The clerk came back bristling. "Who's going to stomp?"

"The bed wetters, I guess." He started getting into the suit.

"Why? It's for science, isn't it?"

"Nobody likes to be watched."

"There you put your finger on it, John. It's the watching part that's worst. If they'd only quit watching us, or come out where we could see them! You know what I think? I think there's some of them among us. In disguise." The clerk smirked mysteriously at what-he-knew-but-wouldn't-tell.

Relke paused with a zipper halfway up. "Who do you mean—watching? Checkers?"

The clerk snorted and resumed what he had been doing when Relke entered: he was carefully taping his share of stock in Mme. d'Annecy's venture up on the wall among a display of pin-ups. "You know who I mean," he muttered.

"No, I don't."

"The ones that dug that mine, that's who."

"Aliens? Oh, bullspit."

"Yeah? You'll see. They're keeping an eye on us, all right. There's a guy on the African team that even talked to some of them."

"Nuts. He's not the first guy that ever talked to spooks. Or demons. Or saucer pilots. You don't have to be a Looney to be a lunatic."

That made the clerk sore, and he stomped off to his sanctum to brood. Relke finished getting into the suit and stepped into the airlock. Some guys had to personify their fear. If there was danger, somebody must be responsible. They had to have an Enemy. Maybe it helped, believing in gremlins from beyond Pluto. It gave you something to hate when your luck was bad.

He met Joe just outside the lock. The pusher was waiting to get in.

"Hey, Pappy, I own up. I was goofing off awhile ago. If you want to be sore—" Relke stopped. Something was wrong. Joe was breathing hard, and he looked sick.

"Christ, I'm not sore! *Not now!*"

"What's wrong, Joe?"

The pusher paused in the hatchway. "Run on back to the line. Keep an eye on Braxton. I'm getting a jeep. Back in a minute." He went on inside and closed the hatch.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Relke trotted toward the last tower. After a while he could hear Braxton talking in spasms on the frequency. It sounded like sobbing. He decided it *was* sobbing.

"Theah just isn't any God," Bama was moaning. "Theah just couldn't be a God and be so mean. He was the bes' frien' a man evah had, and he nevah did nothin' to deserve it. Oh, God, oh, God, why did it have to be *him?* I've done penance fo' what my gran'pa did to his, an' I been as color blind as any Yankee evah bohn, an' I love him like my own brother. Theah jus' can't be any God in Heaven, to treat a man that way, when he been so . . ." Braxton's voice broke down into incoherent sobbing.

There was a man lying on the ground beside the tower. Relke could see Benet bending over him. Benet was clutching a fistful of the man's suit. He crossed himself slowly and stood up. A safety team runabout skidded to a halt beside the tower, and three men piled out. Benet spread his hands at them in a wide shrug and turned his back.

"What happened?" Relke asked as he loped up to Beasley.

"Bama was welding. Lije walked over to ask him for a wrench or something. Bama turned around to get it, and Lije sat down on the strut with the hot weld."

"Blow out?"

"He wasn't that lucky. Call it a fast slowout."

Novotny drove up, saw the safety jeep, and started bellowing furiously at them.

"Take it easy, chum. We got here as quick as we could."

"Theah jus' can't be any God in Heaven . . ."

They got Henderson in the safety runabout. Novotny manufactured a hasty excuse to send Braxton off with them, for grief had obviously finished his usefulness for awhile. Everybody stood around in sickly silence and stared after the jeep.

"Benet, you know how to pray," Novotny muttered. "Say something, altar boy."

"Aw, Joe, that was fifteen years ago. I haven't lived right."

"Hell, who has? Go ahead."

Benet muttered for a moment and turned his back. *"In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti . . ."* He paused.

"Can't you pray in English?" Joe asked.

"We always said it in Latin. I only served at a few masses."

"Go ahead."

Benet prayed solemnly while they stood around with bowed heads and shuffled their boots in the dust. Nobody understood the words, not even Benet, but somehow it seemed important to listen.

"Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine. Et lux perpetua luceat . . ."

Relke looked up slowly and let his eyes wander slowly across the horizon. There were still some meteorites coming in, making bright little winks of fire where they bit

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into the plain. Deadly stingers out of nowhere, heading nowhere, impartially orbiting, random as rain, random as death. The debris of creation. Relke decided Braxton was wrong. There was a God, all right, maybe personal, maybe not, but there was a God, and He wasn't mean. His universe was a deadly contraption, but maybe there wasn't any way to build a universe that wasn't a deadly contraption—like a square circle. He made the contraption, and He put Man in it, and Man was a fairly deadly contraption himself. But the funny part of it was, there wasn't a damn thing the universe could do to a man that a man wasn't built to endure. He could even endure it when it killed him. And gradually he could get the better of it. It was the consistency of matched qualities—random mercilessness and human endurance—and it wasn't mean, it was a fair match.

"Poor Lije. God help him."

"All right," Novotny called. "Let's pull cable, men."

"Yeah, you know what?" said Beasley. "Those dames went to Crater City. The quicker we get the line finished, the quicker we get back. Damn Parkeson anyhow!"

"Hell, why do you think he let them go there, Beeze?" Tremini jeered. "So we'd work our butts off to finish quick, that's why. Parkeson's no idiot. If he'd sent them packing for somewhere else, maybe we'd finish, maybe we wouldn't."

"Cut the jawing. Somebody run down and get the twist out of that span before she kinks. Relke, start taking up slack."

Atop the steel truss that supported the pendulous insulators, the lineman began jacking up the slack line. He glanced toward the landing site where the ship had been, and it was hard to believe it had ever been there at all. A sudden improbable dream that had come and gone and left nothing behind. Nothing? Well, there was a share of stock . . .

"Hey, we're all capitalists!" Relke called.

Benet hooted. "Take your dividends out in trade."

"Listen, someday they'll let dames come here again and get married. That's one piece of community property you better burn first."

"That d'Annecy dame thought of everything."

"Listen, that d'Annecy dame is going to force an issue. She'll clean up, and a lot of guys will throw away small fortunes, but before it's over, they'll let women in space again. Now quit jawing, and let's get to work."

Relke glanced at the transformer station where he had taken the girl. He tried to remember what she looked like, but he got Fran's face instead. He tried to transmute the image into Giselle's, but it stayed Fran. Maybe he hadn't really seen Giselle at all. Maybe he had looked at her and seen Fran all along, but it had been a poor substitution. It

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had accomplished one thing, though. He felt sorry for Fran now. He no longer hated her. She had stuck it out a long time before there had been another guy. And it was harder for a wife on Earth than it was for a husband on Luna. She had to starve in the midst of plenty. He had only to deny himself what he couldn't get anyhow, or even see. She was the little girl with her nose against the bakery window. He was only fasting in the desert. It was easy; it put one beyond temptation. To fast in a banquet hall, one had to be holy. Fran wasn't holy. Relke doubted he'd want a wife who was holy. It could get damnably dull.

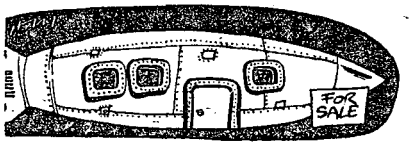
A quick glance at Earth told him it was still in the skyless vault. Maybe she'll come, if they ever let them come, he thought wistfully. Maybe the guy'll be a poor substitute, and she'll figure out who she's really married to, legal instruments notwithstanding. Maybe . . . O God, let her come! . . . women had no business on Luna, but if they didn't then neither did men, nor Man, who had to be a twosome in order to be recognizably human.

"Damn it, Relke, work that jack!" Joe yelled. "We got to build that line!"

Relke started cranking again, rocking his body to the rhythm of the jack, to the rhythm of echoes of thought. Got to build the line. Damn it, build the line. Got to build the line. Build the damn it line. The line was part of a living thing that had to grow. The line was yet another creeping of life across a barrier, a lungfish flopping from pool to pool, an ape trying to walk erect across still another treeless space. Got to build the line. Even when it kills you, got to build the line, the bloody endless line. The lineman labored on in silence. The men were rather quiet that shift.

BINDERS . . .

FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION has in stock a supply of strong, handsome binders for your copies of F&SF. Each binder holds one complete volume—six issues. The price is $1.50 postpaid. Send your order and remittance to: Special Binder Dept., FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION, 527 Madison Ave., N. Y. 22, N. Y.



Moving Away?

Wherever you go, F&SF will follow — if you send us your new address as early as possible (5 or 6 weeks are needed.) Please be sure to give us your old address as well as the new one.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE
FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION
527 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK 22, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stuart Palmer has been, for more years than he would care to be reminded of, a major creator of American detective stories. His fantasies are few, foolish and delightful; and if they cannot claim the same historical significance as the riddles of Hildegarde Withers, our lives would be poorer and more sober without them.

Dream Stuff

by STUART PALMER

THE DREAMS OF HERBERT BEMIS DIFFERED from those of other men only in one important particular. Yet his dreaming caused a cosmic blast which is still echoing around the outer fringes of the Universe.

Of course all men dream. So certainly does man's first and best friend, the dog, who "hunts in dreams." This may also be true of some of the other higher mammals; there has been little research on the subject. Perhaps even the reptiles dream too, and it might be interesting to conjecture what dreams the great saurians may have had, with one tiny brain in the skull and one also in the tail section. Imagine the possibility of dreaming two dreams at once! But dreams for the most part are *only* dreams. (Reference here is not to the waking dreams of poet or philosopher or architect or warlord, but only to those flashes and montages and extravaganzas which pass through the sleeping mind, bubbling up from the subconscious—and which are briefly remembered on waking or else forever lost.)

But not Herbert Bemis. *He* dreamed differently, as the records show—or *used* to show. And so as a result of his dreaming, Fola Mason in the flesh—and oh what flesh!—walked down Hollywood Boulevard and caused mild riots; she drove her red Jaguar down Wilshire Boulevard and caused a lot of traffic jams and fights and all sorts of things. Because Fola was just about the most terrific hunk of woman since Helen of Troy launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium.

Fola Mason was fictional and at the same time real; she did cast a shadow. It might be noted that she was magnificently equipped physically; there is no need to dwell on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that. But she would certainly have given any Miss America an inferiority complex. She was also intellectually brilliant; it is reported that she had proved Fermat's Last Theorem, which had defeated all mathematicians for 320 years, and could explain Einstein to a five-year-old child. In fact, she was just *more so* than anybody!

Fola was a lovely dream-girl, surrounded by elderly leering financiers with mink coats and yachts, pursued by movie and television talent scouts and major producers and all that sort of thing. But she was oddly conceived, and she is gone from us now, and we shall never see her like again.

Because Herbert Bemis dreamed her up. When Herbert dreamed, he really dreamed. Luckily for his fellow man, Herbert had few if any nightmares. But it must be granted that he did have an unusually fertile imagination, perhaps stimulated overmuch by his spasmodic reading of light popular magazines and the viewing of movies. Of course, like almost everybody else, he had all sorts of suppressed desires and inhibitions and complexes. Perhaps Herbert Bemis dreamed more vividly than most of us because of the essential everydayness of his existence. Deep in his heart, he wanted things Otherwise—he didn't know just how.

On the surface, Herbert Bemis was very close to being The Average Man, The Man in the Street, The Little Man about whom the politicians are always talking at election time. His were really rather short and simple annals: he was twenty-eight years old, a bit overweight, and his hairline was already beginning to recede. He had graduated from a small-town high school (North Fork, Iowa) without honors and without dishonor; he had done his two years in the Army and made the non-com rank of corporal; he had taken a veteran's short training course in electronics and was now working as a television repairman in Burbank, California. He would probably never be anything else, except that just possibly someday he would own his own TV repair shop. He liked baseball, hot Mexican or Italian food, loud neckties, a few beers after work, and girls—though the last confused and puzzled him most of the time he was in their company.

To the detached observer, Herbert Bemis would seem to have been cut out of a common mold—*Homo Americanus Vulgaris*. His future life pattern was quite plainly outlined.

One of these days he would marry some pretty secretary or file-clerk or telephone operator and settle down, making the first payment on a tract-house in the Valley. Then he would set about raising a few children and a few flowers and a great many weeds and much crabgrass; he would chat with his neighbors over the back fence, go into

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

debt for furniture and a bigger car than he could afford, and otherwise perform most of the natural functions of his type and class.

But it was not to be. Herbert Bemis had no future. Or rather, he had too damn many futures, just because of the unusual way he dreamed. Herbert dreamed in glorious technicolor—and when he dreamed, he dreamed for *keeps*.

It was never supposed to have happened. It had never happened before, and of course now that the situation has been brought to the attention of the proper Authorities it will never happen again, but there it was. Whatever Herbert Bemis dreamed had to come true, immediately. The odd reason for that will be seen in a moment.

Mercifully, Herbert himself did not know anything about all this. Unlike the young lady from Peru in the fabled limerick, he did not wake up one night in a horrible fright to find it was perfectly true. His dreams, fantastically actual as they were, went on out into space and time, and left him scatheless. Herbert knew that dreams were only dreams, no matter how exciting and satisfying they seemed to be; at the moment of waking when and if they were remembered at all he usually forgot all about them before he had finished shaving. He never thought of trying to write them down, nor of consulting *The Gypsy Dream Book* or a psychoanalyst.

So Herbert Bemis went on with the orderly routine of his life, patiently fixing up other people's old television sets for eight hours a day, eating most of his meals at Joe's Diner across the street, playing a little pool or bowling a few games in the evenings, perhaps enjoying a date with some friendly and attractive young woman on Saturday night, and always having a late snack before going to bed. His snacks were usually something he called "Dagwoods"—strange sandwiches composed of ham or chicken or other cold meats allied with onions and frankfurters and lettuce and jelly and relish and pickles and anything else available in his complacent landlady's refrigerator. These sandwiches were indeed fearful and wonderful concoctions, but while they may in some way explain the intensity of his dreaming, they cannot possibly explain its results.

On the memorable morning of Sunday, April 21, 1957, Herbert returned to his monastic little room a few minutes after one o'clock. He at once laid out the contents of his pockets on the battered bureau, ruefully surveying the remains of his paycheck. But what a super-evening it had been! Fola had been in such an unusually friendly mood, during dinner and then at the movie and in the Chinese supper place afterwards! And then there had been the half hour in his parked car, with the moonlight all around them . . .

In a semi-daze, Herbert went

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through the necessary motions of going to bed; he removed with sentimental reluctance the traces of lipstick from his pudgy face, brushed his teeth, hung up his best suit and threw the rest of his clothing onto a chair, and turned out the light. He was almost immediately asleep, and that night for various reasons he dreamed hard. He tossed and turned and muttered in his sleep, clutching the pillow. The dream was really one of his super-productions.

And naturally it caused cosmic chaos Upstairs.

"So now *this!*" cried the particular Junior Guardian whose unhappy lot it was to supervise this minor part of the Galaxy. (Guardians are impossible to describe here; they are not exactly angels in the traditional concept, and they wear no haloes or wings, but if you like you may think of them in those terms.) Guardians naturally have to take their work very seriously indeed, and they do not like Situations to become Crises—as this one down on old little Earth was appearing to do.

"And so we have to create a new Fola Mason yet!" he continued.

"It's been done, sir. And let me tell you that the technical crew is sick and tired of it all. But there she is, composed of alabaster and fire and honey and sweetness and light, with the voice of a nightingale and the mind of an Aspasia, lovely as Helen and Deirdre and all the movie and stage stars this jerk ever saw—and with a strong essence of his mother!"

"But this just cannot be!"

"It's the way it *has* to be. We had to start from Scratch, if you will pardon the expression. There was absolutely no chance of revising the already-existing Fola; she is a rather ordinary female of her species, not too bright and not too pretty; she will be fat and stupid in a dozen years. Besides, she has her heart set on marrying a certain salesman of used cars, and leaving Herbert Bemis in the lurch. We had no choice but to do an original, setting up his dream-girl from original clay."

"And now . . . ?"

"And now Fola—shall we call her Fola?—is cavorting around at Ciro's and Mocambo and other Hollywood nightspots with Clark Gable, Franchot Tone, Rock Hudson, Marlon Brando, Elvis Presley and almost every other male movie star that Herbert Bemis remembers. He visualized the girl as the center of adoration for such people; it makes the whole thing very difficult as most of these men are married and some of them are tired out from picture work, and anxious to be someplace else—such as fishing in the High Sierras or playing the slot machines at Las Vegas. But no. They have to be dancing attendance on Fola. That's the way Herbert dreamed it. I suppose in a way we're lucky that he didn't dream himself too vividly into his dreams, and he forgets them when he wakes. And we are, of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

course, seeing to it that the two Folas do not meet, which would cause a backlash that none of us dares to think about."

"It seems reasonably under control," said the Junior Guardian hopefully. "Perhaps we could postpone taking the problem to the higher levels . . . ?"

"But sir, there are angles. The dream Fola is so terrific, to use the vernacular term of the day and area, that she is literally stopping clocks. And breaking up homes right and left. But Herbert Bemis's imagination unfortunately went only so far; he knows not too much about women nor about psychology and physiology. For instance, Fola drinks only champagne—but she never goes to the bathroom. She never bathes—but she smells like a rose petal. She eats nothing but an occasional spoonful of caviar, and she is healthy and gay and charming at all times, fond of all outdoor sports. It is fairly obvious that no girl can maintain that sort of existence for very long—not on champagne and caviar. Something has to be done at once, sir!"

"And all this," exploded the Junior Guardian, "because some twenty-eight years ago there had to be a malfunction of the Machine! This *automation* thing I have never really believed in, just between ourselves. It was done better by hand. There is always the chance of short-circuits like that one. But I guess we are stuck with it. According to the Rules, as long as Herbert Bemis lives, every single dream of his must come absolutely true. It isn't fair."

"Blast him," murmured the other.

"If it were only possible to do just that! But I can tell you frankly that it would never be OK'd at the top level. It is all too much for us. I can see that it calls for a staff-conference." He waved his hand.

And so, within fractions of a second of Earth-time, there was a staff-conference. It was a conference on a very high level indeed; the Dozen were even all of them present, backed by many of their assistants and couriers who had had to be momentarily taken off far more important projects. It was an august moment, and even the stars stood still.

"What in *Hell* is all this about?" demanded the Senior Guardian testily, when they were all gathered.

"But it's not that, sir," explained the Junior hastily. "At least not so far as we know. The reports from our intelligence people down there are that the Adversary and his group are as mystified about it all as we are, only naturally they are more amused at the manifestations."

"Well then, what on *Earth*—"

"But it isn't just affecting Earth, sir. The situation developed there, at the moment of the conception of this Herbert Bemis, but it has extended to other planets of that solar system and threatens to spread all over that Galaxy and nobody knows where it will stop. We—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Bemis?" interrupted the Senior, frowning mightily.

"Yes, sir. I have his dossier here. He is an insignificant individual living in Burbank, California, United States of America, Terra, Sol III, etc. etc. But he dreams, and according to the Rules, his dreams have to come true—"

"Nonsense! Dreams were provided to man for a certain very limited psychic escape function and release."

"But that's the way it seems to be, sir. His dreams are exceptionally real and vivid at certain times; they are three- and even four-dimensional. He usually forgets them soon after waking, but *we* are stuck with them. The work-crew is about worn out. You have no idea—"

"I am beginning to have one, and not a nice one," snapped the Senior Guardian coldly. "But go on."

"There is no question, sir, but that it all originated in some minor malfunction of the Machine. Of course it has been overhauled and checked and rechecked very thoroughly, and the situation will certainly not occur again. Once is enough, and too much. Steps have been taken, and there have been certain transfers and demotions of personnel. Still, the Bemis situation is there. And believe me, sir, it is getting beyond our power to cope with. His dreams up to date require a full-time task-force. If he goes on dreaming—"

"More specific information," said the Senior.

"Well, sir, it wasn't really very difficult in Herbert Bemis' early days. During his childhood he dreamed of being chased by a cow, and falling off a cliff, and being snatched up by an eagle—simple things like that. We didn't have to go out and create cows, or set up cliffs, or manufacture eagles; those things are already in existence on his planet. It all seemed like a very interesting phenomena at the time; little Herbert dreamed of creampuffs or fried chicken or making the basketball team in high school, and we could arrange all that, with already existing facilities."

"You were playing with fire," put in the Senior. "This all should have been nipped in the bud."

"So we see now, sir. But when he was reading Westerns we could quite easily recreate cow-towns in Wyoming complete with evil gamblers and elderly ranchers with virginal daughters and loose ladies of the evening who had hearts of gold. All that we had in stock. I will admit that we had somewhat more difficulty with his dreams of finding buried pirate treasure. But we did managed to find enough sunken ships with gold loot in them to plant a spot in the Galapagos Islands in a satisfactory manner. And then when Bemis dreamed of climbing Mount Everest, we had only to spark a *real* expedition and then cut down on the winds and the storms and temporarily step up the oxygen in that area. So far we could cope."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"There were also other dreams," put in the Assistant. "I remember—"

"We need not go into those," interrupted his immediate superior firmly. "Remember, the damsels were nebulous, and could be borrowed from and returned to certain still-existent harems and seraglios and movie studio lots and Park Avenue apartments. But what was really rough was that business with Barsoom."

"What in Heaven's name are you talking about?" demanded the now exasperated Senior.

"Barsoom, sir, is the name this Herbert Bemis uses for the planet Mars, a close neighbor of his Earth. So this jerk, he dreams that he makes a trip there, in a rocket which luckily was so completely imaginary that we didn't have to provide it. And he finds it a lush, living planet teeming with beautiful females of his own species and wearing almost no clothes—in that climate, yet!—and also with fantastic bug-eyed monsters with six legs. Sextipedal formation is manifestly just about impossible for mammals, as you know. There also, believe it or not, had to be canals—"

"Canals? Canals on Mars, where there is only a teacupful of water? This is ridiculous!"

"We know, sir. So we had to do a face-lifting job there, to fit his silly dream. It now has an atmosphere and water flowing in the canals and a lot of underdressed ladies who are having a rather bad time with those monsters. Of course we made the monsters bovine and herbivorous, in case that will help. But this sort of thing just cannot go on!" The Junior was very much in earnest. "Any night now this Bemis will start dreaming about outer space and a trip to Proxima Centauri or farther; the entire matter is getting out of hand."

"So I see." The Senior turned to the assembled group, and for a moment communed with the Dozen. "Well?" he said.

"It seems an impasse," said One.

"Even if the Machine is repaired, the damage seems to have been done," put in Three.

"But it is manifestly impossible to let Herbert Bemis go on dreaming, no matter what the Rules and the Directive say," began Seven. "Sense is sense."

"Creation is not a toy for children," put in Two. "Steps must be taken, immediately. But for the life of me I can't see just what."

"Perhaps a Miracle?" suggested Nine.

"I'm afraid that's completely out of the question," pronounced the Senior regretfully. "Too much red tape and delay. While we were getting it approved this Bemis fellow might dream himself all over Hellangone—if you will pardon the expression. It is of course too bad that he never dreams of world peace for his planet, or of food and freedom for the hungry and oppressed peoples down there. . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He has never done so, sir. And he is not likely to do so. He just dreams selfishly." The Junior shook his head.

There was a pause for cogitation. Then one of the Assistants spoke up. "What about this Fola girl? Couldn't we—?"

"Certainly not!" cut in the Junior. "She cannot remain in circulation. She is creating sheer havoc, and it is indicated that she will create more. Apart from the immediate problems of trying to keep her lovely and healthy on a diet of champagne and caviar, and without her physical and physiological completion so that she could function as a normal human, there are other things. In a short time her photographs in color will have put out of business a firm which specializes in Marilyn Monroe calenders, and beggared several artists who draw pictures for *Esquire* and other similar magazines. MGM has put her under a straight five-year contract, which will probably wreck the studio—Bemis never dreamed any acting ability into her. Apart from the broken homes and the wrecked marriages and all that, she will shortly run for Congress and be elected, and all over the state of California husbands and wives will fight until dawn over that. She is just not for that World."

"Why couldn't we let Mr. Bemis dream of being with her on a desert island, picking coconuts and digging yams and catching fish—and thus take them both out of existence as far as it affects others?" said another of the eager-beaver Assistants.

"But not practical," decided the Senior Guardian. "You forget one item. He might stop dreaming for awhile, if he had his dream-Fola in his arms, but he'd get bored sooner or later and start up again. And if they had offspring—Heaven only knows if this unholy twist of the Machine might be transmitted to them. But let us wait just a minute. Is this Bemis really essential to anybody?"

"No, sir," the Junior said quickly. "He is a bachelor, an orphan, performing only a mild function in the entertainment field to earn his daily bread; he is really neither loved nor needed nor hated nor much of anything."

"And he gets most of his ideas, from which you say his dreams are based, from magazine stories and novels and shows?"

"All of them, sir."

The Senior Guardian was not Senior for nothing. "Very well. This is my considered decision, which naturally I make with a certain reluctance. But it has to be. Herbert Bemis never happened at all!"

"But *sir!*" said several of the Twelve, in unison.

"I know, I know! But a mistake can be rectified, and the Books can be erased and corrected. I have said it. Herbert Bemis is only a character in somebody else's dream; he never existed."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They all thought about it. "But wouldn't this seem to contravene Paragraph Four?" somebody said doubtfully.

"Certainly. But the existing situation contravenes the entire Purpose!" The Senior was firm, and as I have said he was not Senior for nothing. "If you will all give me your attention, please. It is to be handled like this. Herbert Bemis was only a figment in the dream of some writer of the type of escape stories he used to read. That is that. I'm sure that the Assistants and the work-crew can find a suitable author who is not too busy at the moment. Let him write it—and at that moment let Mr. Bemis and all his dream creations be erased, permanently. This also can and should be retroactive, certainly. So let the work-crews and the technicians clean up the mess, at once. Mars is to be again an almost dead lump of dry cold rusted iron, without damsels or monsters or canals. Everything returns to status quo, period."

"And Fola?" said somebody.

"She goes back into the matrix; she is too dear for man's possessing. Strike down the rest of the sets and backgrounds and people. It never happened, and everybody can go home. Are we then agreed? Good! Of course, I will now entertain a motion to adjourn."

And so the stars moved again in their courses, and the emergency conference of the Guardians was adjourned, *sine die*. The influence of its immediate action was felt even down on Earth within a very short time indeed. When the landlady came up to Herbert Bemis's room to put it into rights next morning, she felt a little shiver pass over her and then suddenly realized that this nice little room had been standing too long vacant, and there ought to be a FOR RENT sign in the front window. Herbert's employer at the television repair shop came down to work and decided that, after all, he really did need a bright young man as assistant; the work was too much for him. And the original Fola Mason realized that she didn't have a date for Saturday night, and coyly called up the young man from the used-car agency.

As for you, don't look in your high school annual for a picture of your old schoolmate H rbe t B mi ; it will be somebody else or just a blank space. You never knew anybody named rb B i . There simply never was any

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A sunny day in a cemetery, a child's intimations of womanhood, a warm sense of the deeper nature of jealousy—these are some of the ingredients from which Mildred Clingerman brews the latest of her tender and sensitive fantasies.

A Day for Waving

by MILDRED CLINGERMAN

EDEN SLEPT AS ALL CHILDREN SLEEP, with sodden abandon. She lay as if mired in some dark pond till the light and heat of the summer day dragged her to the surface. Once awake she made no effort to submerge again. There were frightening shadows in the pond, and sometimes it seemed to Eden that she'd spent the whole night battling them. The really frightening part of her dreams was the way vague, bewildering daytime feelings turned into *things* at night. How did it happen, for instance, that the hot, dissolved feeling of jealous love turned then into Eden's own hand, squeezing to death a little yellow chicken?

The disturbing thought of the baby chicken brought Eden out of bed to search for her mother and grandmother. The house had a late-morning quietness that Eden disliked. It meant the grownups had set the day going without her and now Eden would have to run hard all day to catch up and belong. From the back of the house she heard the complaining sound of the opening of the oven door, and she darted kitchenward. But it was only Lyle, looking fragile and dour in his Huck Finn bib overalls and no shirt. The two children looked at each other without intensity and with complete acceptance. With no word spoken Eden felt suddenly oriented. She whirled and ran for the east veranda.

Here she found her mother and grandmother sitting far apart in the stretched-out silence. The tension that had been building in the house for weeks lay between them, and Eden felt called upon to commit some small naughtiness to assert herself. She slammed the screen door behind her and danced across the warm stones right off the low porch into the four-o'clocks.

Her grandmother, she knew, was watching from her chair just out

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the sun path. The palm leaf fan in her hand ceased its slow waving and made imperious, chopping motions.

"About time, young lady. Your mother and I have been up for hours. Get yourself out of my four-o'clocks. Where's Lyle?"

"He's got his head poked in the oven."

"Your breakfasts are on the table, covered. If you young'ns would get your lazy selves out of bed mornings you could eat a civilized meal in a civilized way."

Eden put on her pouring-water-off-a-duck's-back look. Mama Hawthorne regarded her grandchild with pretended distaste, pulling her mouth down and raising one eyebrow. "I could wipe that smirk off your face, if I was a mind to. Your mother may be able to let your upbringing slide, but *I* can't."

Eden ignored her and glanced at her mother, who sat on the steps examining her long, perfect legs bared to the sun. Reba smiled at her daughter and murmured as if by rote, "Go eat your breakfast. Mind your grandmother. . . ." She seemed to rouse a little then, enough to add, "Wash and dress. And don't forget to brush your teeth. After you've eaten I'll take a comb to your hair."

"Teeth." Mama Hawthorne snorted. "*Which* reminds me, Reba," her voice rose to weighted meaning. "Is old snaggletooth still hanging around? 'Twas him I suppose you were out with last night till all hours. You're mighty quiet this morning, which is always a sure sign."

"Of what?" Eden planted herself between her mother and grandmother, still trying to edge her way into the current that flowed between them.

Mama Hawthorne fanned a little faster. Her face reddened with determined effort. "Ask your mother," she said stubbornly. "It would take the recording angel to keep up with her love life, and though nobody made *me* a gift of the details, I have eyes to see with, whatever your mother may think."

"Reba!" Eden thrilled. "Are we going to get married again?" She began to dance across the porch, hoping to fall in the four-o'clocks, but Mama Hawthorne grabbed her by the gown tail and held her fast.

"Nonsense!" she bellowed. "Who on God's living earth would marry a snaggletooth dentist?"

"Reba will! Reba will! Won't you? *Please?*" Eden squirmed away from her grandmother. "Then we'll move to the city and have a house all our own, like when Daddy was alive." Eden searched for other words that would tell more clearly all the things it would mean, but she could not find them. They seemed part and parcel of the bewildering feelings that would never embody themselves in the daylight.

Reba only smiled her slow smile and stroked her legs.

Just outside the hedge two flowery hats bobbed up and down, going

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

past. "Hush!" Mama Hawthorne hissed. "You needn't publish your mother's foolishness to all the neighbors. Reba, pull down that skirt. They may turn in. Eden, get yourself out of sight—you're practically naked. Marry again, indeed! Your father would turn over in his grave at the idea of your being bossed by a toothy stepfather . . . and bossed you'd be, Missy! No running around half-naked in the middle of the morning. No sleeping late for you! Hounded from pillar to post you'd be—and likely half your teeth snatched out just from spite . . ."

While she spoke Mama Hawthorne rose ponderously from the creaky chair. Eden watched her smooth out her face and prepare a smile for the flowered hats, in case they turned in. Mama Hawthorne seemed to be trying the smile for size, Eden thought. Suddenly she recognized the emotion in her grandmother's face. It was the same jealous love that Eden knew so well, and she wondered if Mama Hawthorne felt as if she were squeezing a fluffy chick to death. Eden wanted to comfort her grandmother, and she moved close and leaned against Mama Hawthorne's great bulk, hiding her face against the starchy cotton dress that smelled of sachet and a too-hot iron.

"They've gone on," Mama Hawthorne said. "That's a blessing." The smile went back into hiding. "I'll say this, Eden. Unless you get in there and eat your breakfast, there'll be no visiting the cemetery for you today."

Eden hugged her grandmother in a fierce excess of love, grateful for the warm permissiveness that lay just under the harshness of her words.

"Stop squeezing, Eden! Yes, we're going to the cemetery. We'll take a lunch, and I'll weed around mysister-Lil—and Hawthorne, maybe, if the mood's on me."

"And my father, too?"

"Likely!" Mama Hawthorne snorted. "After the way he used to whack me on the bottom and then yell 'gelatine' at the top of his lungs. Weed him yourself."

Eden joined Lyle in the dining room, where ivy clustered so thickly outside the windows the room was shadowed with undersea color. She made happy, swimming motions through the green gloom to reach the round oak table. Lyle sat with his back to the windows. Eden wouldn't have turned her back to those windows for sacks of nickels and dimes. Once, long ago, she had seen a green dragon peeking in at her. It didn't make any difference how many times they told her she had probably seen a mountain boomer, if anything. She could never forget the horrid, flat head and the nasty "Aha, little girl" look in his beady eyes. He had come straight out of the worst of her dreams to confront her when she felt safest. Since that time she had never been completely sure that the two states

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of being might not at any moment mingle. The possibility both fascinated and terrified her.

But now the dining room was not frightening. The table was, as usual, covered over with a white linen cloth, bumpy with the bottles and big bowls under it. Lyle had laid back one little edge of the cloth to get to his plate. He was eating steadily and with his eyes riveted to the king of hearts he had taken to carrying around with him.

Lyle was usually a very silent little boy, but when he did talk, good for explaining things—particularly the kinds of things Eden found most bewildering. He was brief and assured (Eden did not like explanations to be long-drawn-out) and he was only six weeks older than she was. Very young to be her uncle, but just the right age for understandable explanations.

Eden laid back the cloth to find her own plate. She ate cold biscuits buttered and honeyed hours ago, cold sausage, apple sauce, some bread-and-butter pickles, and when Lyle still did not look up, tilted the coffeepot and drank from the spout.

"I'll tell," Lyle growled. He turned the card around and looked at the king of hearts who still stubbornly faced to the left.

"Reba and I are going to get married again," Eden challenged.

Lyle glared at Eden darkly and went back to staring at the card. "You won't," he said. "I've told you, you won't."

"Why? Has the king winked yet?" Eden asked.

"Three times," Lyle said. "If this end of him winks your father will come swooshing up out of his grave at four fifteen in the morning."

"Phoo—why?"

"You know why." Lyle gritted his teeth at Eden and crossed his eyes. "He hates dentists."

"What will he do to the dentist?"

"He'll wring him out like a dishrag." Lyle turned horribly limp and wobbled his head with his tongue hanging out.

Eden chewed thoughtfully at another cold biscuit. "Phoo . . ." She tried to draw her mouth down at Lyle, as Mama Hawthorne did, to prove her disbelief, but her mouth began to tremble uncertainly. Could it be? Lyle knew all about ghosts, certainly. . . . Lyle's ghosts often bobbed up in her dreams. Mightn't even a ghost know the squeeze-a-chicken feeling? Probably. And Lyle, imitating the dentist, looked dreadfully squeezed. Did something slither through the twisted ivy over the windows? A hand fell heavily on Eden's shoulder. She screamed and dived under the table.

Mama Hawthorne's feet marched all around the table while her hands gathered dishes and silver. "Nerviest child I ever saw—Come out of there, Eden!—but eats like a field hand. Lyle, *move*."

An hour later the four of them walked Indian file down the lane. The bees in the long line of locust

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trees made it a humming, yellow road, dancing in the heat. Several times each summer they all made the pilgrimage to the family cemetery. Eden had always enjoyed going there, till recently. She liked playing with the ornaments on the children's graves, but today she was ill at ease, remembering her queer dreams and Lyle's threatening words.

Mama Hawthorne was in front calling back things to Reba. Lyle and Eden, both of whom had been combed and scrubbed to the point of rebellion, dawdled as far to the rear as they dared. Mama Hawthorne carried the lunch basket and a trowel. Reba carried a striped blanket to sit on. She was dressed up quite a lot, Eden saw. Eden carried her straw hat in her hands and tried to kick sand back into Lyle's shoes. Mama Hawthorne talked and grunted her way over a stile and cut across a field, with Reba following silently, careful of the sheer georgette dress. Eden clambered after Lyle, who was trying now to keep close to Reba. Lyle developed these sudden passions for Reba, sometimes in the middle of church, even. Then he'd walk on everybody's feet to get to where she was sitting. Eden hated him to look calf-eyed at her mother.

After these occasions she could hardly wait to shout at Lyle, "I love her the most!" Then she would, for a time, hate both her mother and Lyle because they were brother and sister. Lyle had explained they were more kin to each other than Eden was to either of them.

Now, trotting fast to keep up, Eden yelled at Lyle, taunting him. "Reba and I are going to get married! First thing you know we're going to move to the ci-ty!" Lyle hesitated, while Reba walked on, slowly, beautifully.

"It's a double ugly lie!" Lyle blocked the way. "Just a word, one more word," he yelled, "and I'll make the king wink his eye!"

"Don't do it!" Eden blinked hard. She sought and found a diversion, offering it to Lyle like a bribe. "Don't do it, Lyle, and I'll tell you what. When we get to the cemetery I'll nibble a piece of Great-great-grandma Cole! I promise I will."

"You won't. Cowardy cat. You never do."

"I will, I will! This time I will. How does she taste?"

"Like a cedar chest smells." Lyle grinned wickedly. "And a little *something else.*"

Eden gulped and kept her breakfast down. She followed the others through the little back gate of the cemetery. They climbed a low hill by way of a sunken brown path. It seemed cooler when they got to the top. Reba spread the blanket carefully between two mounded graves in the shade of a giant old cedar tree which grew exactly out of the middle of one of the mounds. Eden glanced fearfully at the cedar, and then read the inscription on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

slanted tombstone. For certain sure this tree was Great-great-grandma Cole. Though Eden had known and accepted it all her life, today she hated the very thought of the tree. On the other side of the blanket was mysisterLil, whom Mama Hawthorne had come to weed. Eden was relieved to see that mysisterLil had not yet turned into any kind of tree. Just a few green weeds, she was, outlined with little red flowers.

Mama Hawthorne put on her gardening gloves and changed her hat to a pink sunbonnet she had brought along in the lunch basket. "How mysisterLil loved the color red! That's why I planted all this verbena here, almost a perfect match for the red ostrich-plumed hat we buried with her."

Eden scarcely bothered to listen. This was just the beginning of the litany Mama Hawthorne recited over mysisterLil. Presently it would turn into an account of how mysisterLil died of heart failure the night before her wedding, and of how all the lovely trousseau had been crammed into a special-size coffin with her. Eden waited only for her mother's inevitable three words before she ceased listening altogether:

"How disgustingly vulgar . . ."

Eden removed herself from Great-great-grandma Cole's shade and went to visit the children's section. Here the mounds were all patted out to the approximate length of the child who lay buried there. After measuring herself against a likely looking one, Eden discovered she had surprisingly outgrown "Margaret Clara Cole, aged seven years, four months, and five days" since her last visit. Margaret Clara's play-pretties consisted of a cunning marble rabbit, three large seashells, and a doll-size china pitcher. Eden polished the rabbit on the hem of her dress and rearranged the shells. If she had dared, she would have stolen the pitcher, but Lyle had painted only too clearly the fate of a little girl who once upon a time stole a play-pretty from a cemetery.

"What happened?" Eden had asked scornfully.

"Worms," he said.

"Worms?"

"Came in the night. From the grave. Up on the little girl's bed. Carried her off. In pieces. Down into the hole. In the coffin. Left her there."

Reba was leaning against the trunk of Great-great-grandma Cole, waving at Eden. "Come and eat," she called.

But Lyle was sticking right beside her, Eden saw. She pretended not to hear her mother.

Reba came to get her, alone, taking her by the hand. She said, "After we eat, I may go for a little ride." She squeezed Eden's hand with the secret message.

"Dentist?" Eden whispered.

"Mmmhmm," Reba hummed.

"But what will Mama Hawthorne say?"

Reba lifted her chin to the sun.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"She just wants us all to live together . . . always. Partly because the money goes farther that way. Partly because she wants you and Lyle together. And it's more fun to boss three people, instead of just one."

It was a long explanation, and Eden felt anyway that none of it was exactly the truth. "Tell me, Reba. Was Daddy ever jealous of you? You know, that hot, nasty feeling when you want to *kill* somebody?"

Reba laughed with her head back, her eyelids closed soft and thick. "Jealous, honey? Lord, yes. Crazy jealous. But never as bad as I was. . . ." Eden scarcely heard the last part of Reba's answer. She was staring at Lyle, cramming whole boiled eggs in his mouth, leering at Eden with secret knowledge. Mama Hawthorne was still wielding the trowel.

"Well, Reba," she said, "you haven't so much as set foot near your man's grave. Out of sight, out of mind, I suppose. Lyle, eat your lunch and leave the eggs alone."

"I haven't noticed you weeding Papa." Reba sniffed at a sandwich and gently pulled off the crusts.

"Your Papa was that stingy he wouldn't even feed a weed. His grave's as clean as a whistle."

Lyle was pressing something into Eden's hand. She looked down at it and immediately stopped chewing. It was a little gray-green wad of foliage off Great-great-grandma Cole.

"Reba," she said slowly, "I think I'm going to be sick."

"Nonsense," Mama Hawthorne pounded her on the back. "You eat like a field hand."

Eden lay flat on the blanket, squealing. "I won't! I won't eat even a smidgin of her!"

Mama Hawthorne loomed over her as big as a mountain. "Lyle, do you have anything at all—the least little thing to do with this?"

"No'm." Lyle crossed his heart.

"Nerviest child I ever saw." She reached down and pried open Eden's fist. She extracted the gray-green wad and threw it away. "Mybrother-Tom used to do me the same way." She passed out some more sandwiches.

Eden heard the "ooga . . . ooga" of the car horn out on the road. Reba rose smiling and smoothing at her dress.

"Dentist!" Mama Hawthorne boomed the word like a curse. Reba moved away, waving at them. "Watch out for those long yellow fangs," Mama Hawthorne yelled after her. "If he ever bites you, you'll die of the frothing fits!"

When Reba was out of sight, Mama Hawthorne stopped yelling and spread a newspaper on the other side of Great-great-grandma Cole. "I'll leave you young'ns the blanket. I'm going to close my eyes for an easy space of time, and I bid you do the same."

Eden molded herself against the earth and closed her eyes, but she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could not sleep. Mama Hawthorne was snoring gently. Lyle pinched Eden's arm for attention.

"Ssst . . . listen, Eden," he whispered. "Do you hear it?"

"What?" Eden sat up and looked all around.

"That moaning sound." Lyle widened his eyes at her and clutched her arm. "That's your father. He's crying because Reba has gone off with the dentist. I expect he has a broken heart. She didn't even visit his grave. *You* haven't looked at it, either. It's all clawed up, that grave. He's got a little space open now, but it keeps getting bigger all the time. Tonight he'll heave and shove and open it all the way. Then you'll be sorry, you and Reba. But the dentist will be the sorriest. If you weren't such a coward, you'd go and tell him to hush that groaning. Mama's gonna be awful mad if he wakes her up."

Eden listened so hard her ears hurt. She heard Mama Hawthorne's soft snoring and the wind in the top of Great-great-grandma Cole, and yes, a soft roaring that might or might not be inside her head. She lay down beside Lyle, huddling very close to him, trying to slow her heartbeats and the churning in her stomach. Lyle was murmuring "coward . . . coward . . ." in a monotone that presently soothed him to sleep. Eden lay as if pierced with fright. Now that Lyle was asleep she was certain she could hear her father moaning.

"I expect he has a broken heart," Lyle had said. Eden could not bear the thought. Her throat and chest ached with it, momentarily crowding out the fear. She was up and away before she had time to think, running swiftly down a long avenue of tombstones toward the far corner of the cemetery which held her father's grave. There was scarcely room in her chest for both the pain and the harsh sobs she tried to contain. When she tripped and fell headlong she lay still a moment clutching at the long grass. She felt too heavily tired to get up and go on, but she must. It had all happened as she had known it would one day—the nightmare world had invaded the daylight. Love was not love, but ugly squeezing hands shutting out the sunlight. Lyle was not just old Lyle; he was her torn entor. Mama Hawthorne was not her warmly loving grandmother, but a fat, bossy old woman with hate in her heart. And death was not quietly beautiful sleep. It was bones and worms and turning oneself into a tree or clawing a grave from *inside*. Eden trembled with loathing for the earth she lay on.

The hands that lifted her up were gentle and strong. Eden, too exhausted to struggle, lay passively in the man's arms.

"Baby," the man said, "you mustn't. You've got it wrong. Whatever it is, it's wrong. It must be to put you down like that . . . looking like that. Spill it this instant. Tell me, Eden, baby."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eden told him all of it from the beginning, and while she talked the man eased himself down to lean lazily against a tombstone, with Eden lying across his lap, her head cradled against his arm.

When she had finished the man pointed at the deep sky and let his arm sweep all around the quiet stillness of the cemetery. "Look," he said, "how smooth and empty. Death is like that. Nothing better or worse. But you know that churning sensation you get when you're with Lyle and Mama Hawthorne? That's life, but only a small part of it. Your grandmother isn't always jealous and spiteful, is she? That's just love turned a little blinky, like milk not *quite* sour. She'll get over it; so will Lyle. He needs a good shaking though, for those horror stories. Still, I'll bet he's scared himself a lot worse than he has you, at one time or another. And your belief aided and abetted him. Hop up, I want you to go look at your father's grave."

Eden drew back a little, but the man smiled and firmly led her to the smooth, undisturbed grave.

"Can you remember your father?" he asked.

Eden tried. It was a little like sinking into the deep pond of sleep, but without the fearful shadows Lyle had introduced. A smile emerged and a feeling of hands lifting her high. Nothing else. After a time even those were gone, and Eden was distressed that she could remember only the face of the dentist, whose smile was not nearly as toothy as Mama Hawthorne said.

She looked up to find the man had been watching her face. He swung her up for a moment and held her close before he put her down. Eden wished he would do it again, though ordinarily she disliked being captured and held in this way. It happened so often to her—every time Reba took her into the town. This man must be another of the many kinfolk, all of whom felt privileged to grab at her when she passed them on the street. He had that privileged, family look, and quite certainly he knew all about her.

"I can't remember much," Eden said. "Was he *very* jealous, do you know?"

"Your father? Not unduly, I think. Truth to tell, he and Reba made a game of it. They had a lot of fun, it seems to me."

"Then you don't think he'd mind if Reba married the dentist?"

"Lord, no! I think he'd be very surprised to know she hasn't married long before this! Reba . . . unmarried? Incredible. Such a waste, you know. And it would be so unflattering to her dead husband, if she didn't remarry. One good marriage deserves another."

"But if he loved her very much, wouldn't he just hate the dentist?"

"Why should he? If he loved her very much—and he did, I can assure you of that—he'd only want her to be happy, with or without the dentist."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm glad," Eden said. "I used to be jealous . . . But I'll change if we move to the city, won't I?"

"Of course. You'll go on changing. All through your life there'll be days when suddenly you'll know it's time to move on to something else. Days for waving goodby to all the good and bad and then facing ahead for what comes next. Sounds exciting, doesn't it?"

Eden nodded and the man began to move slowly away. "Tell Reba," he called back, "that I'm tremendously pleased with our joint production." He waved goodby to Eden and then gestured, drawing her attention to the road.

Eden turned and saw Reba approaching. She wanted to call for the man to wait and talk to her mother, but he disappeared over the brow of the hill just as Reba came to stand beside her, taking Eden's hand.

Reba was staring past Eden with a startled look. *"Who was that?"*

"I don't know," Eden said. "One of the cousins, I guess. A nice one. He told me how glad Daddy would be if we married again. Reba, *are* we going to marry the dentist?"

Reba looked distractedly down at Eden. "Yes, we are. But didn't he say anything else . . . that man?"

"He said to tell you he was pleased with the joint production. Something like that." Reba stood with an unbelieving look on her face that filled Eden with impatience. She pulled her mother along, hurrying her back toward Mama Hawthorne and Lyle. Eden could hardly wait to crow her triumph over Lyle.

But somehow she didn't want to when she saw him. By bedtime that night Lyle and Mama Hawthorne had achieved the goodby look, with just a hint of new-found compensations mixed in with it.

"I'll never have to share the pony again," Lyle murmured sleepily to Eden by way of a goodnight.

Eden thought reluctantly that there would be no pony in the city. Never mind.

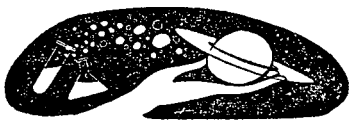
Everytime you left a place, you left *something*.

Lyle crept back into her room for a last, hissing threat.

"Watch out, Eden, the ghosts are walking tonight. . . ."

"I no longer believe in ghosts," Eden said primly.

Just before she sank gratefully into the dark pond she remembered that all day long it had been a waving kind of day.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Roger Phillips (né Graham) has quite possibly written more stories for more magazines under more pseudonyms than any other author who has yet appeared in F&SF. Indeed, it used to be routine for him to provide, on order, the entire contents of an issue under a dozen different names. But of late he has turned away from such writing-to-editorial-order and begun writing stories to satisfy and amuse himself, including such welcome off-beat items as

Homestead

by ROG PHILLIPS

"FATHER," GENEVIEVE SAID, HER PERT figure drawn up with great dignity to cover her embarrassment, "I want a man."

"Now Genevieve," Mort said, studying with undue concentration the razor edge of the meat cleaver he was honing, "What would you want with a man?" He looked up then and grinned at the dull red flush that spread over her face.

"Don't go teasing her, Mort," Opal said, pausing in her ironing. "She's sixteen now—at the age where she just naturally wants a man."

Mort stared at his wife in surprise, then began industriously working the oilstone against the cleaver. Sullenly he muttered, "Let her take one of her brothers then."

"You know that isn't decent!" Opal said, shocked. "Mort, I'm surprised at you!"

"I've been thinking about it," Mort said doggedly. "I can't see any other answer."

"I'll run away to Sin City!" Genevieve said, beginning to cry.

"Now what would you do there?" Mort said patiently. "You wouldn't like their food."

"I don't care," Genevieve said. "Food isn't everything."

"There's another way," Opal said, concentrating on her ironing.

"It wouldn't work," Mort said.

"You and the boys could make it work," Opal said. "In a few months Genevieve's man would adjust."

"Yes, father," Genevieve said eagerly. "I'm sure he would. He'd adjust. And if he—if he . . . I'd grow fond of him. I know I would."

"And," Opal said, "it would be nice to have someone besides us around." She sighed. "Sometimes I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wish I had someone—a woman my age to talk to. Someone like that Mrs. Johnson. I liked her."

Genevieve's eyes lit up. "And her son was the kind of man I have in mind," she said. "If any more like them come around, could we . . . ? Please, father."

Mort looked from his wife to his oldest daughter with growing suspicion. "Just what brought all this on?" he asked.

Opal sighed and shut off the ironer. "I guess it was the leg roast we're having for supper," she said.

"What's that got to do with it?" Mort demanded.

"It's off of Mrs. Johnson," Opal sighed.

Mort looked shocked. "Are we that low on meat?" he asked.

Opal shook her head. "I'd been thinking about her. I guess I was lonesome. So I went ahead of rotation and decided to cook a leg roast off of her."

"She had mighty nice thighs as I remember," Mort said. "The fat went through the meat. Should be juicy and tender."

"Well that has nothing to do with what *I* want," Genevieve said. "I want—"

Her voice was drowned out by the loud claxon sound from the radar. All three of them turned to look at the picture wall of the kitchen, whose scenery landscape had been replaced by the live image picked up by the radar.

In the screen, growing larger by the minute, was one of the standard pressurized desert trucks used by all surface tourists on Mars, approaching over the flat desert.

"A man!" Genevieve prayed.

"A woman!" Opal dreamed hopefully.

"Meat!" Mort said.

Then all was bedlam as the other children ran into the kitchen and everyone dashed about, getting things ready for visitors.

The preparations were swift, efficient, born of long practice. Mrs. Johnson's thigh, which had been thawing in the refrigerator, had to be rushed back to deepfreeze. The three older boys and Mort had to find their blackjacks—always misplaced when they were needed in a hurry. Genevieve and her mother had to rush about, putting the ironed clothing away in the linen closet and straightening things up, then slipping into something fresh and pleasing. And the younger children had to be barked at and threatened until they had properly washed.

Opal had been quite prolific, and it had never been decided whether she was naturally so or whether it was the diet. Twelve children in sixteen years, all of them living and extremely healthy, with no attending physician, was probably some sort of record.

Caution was the word of the day. Not all visitors wound up in deepfreeze, of course. Only those that could never be traced if they were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

missed. Only those whose last reported location was hundreds of miles away. The others were regretfully permitted to go their way while Mort and Opal and their twelve children hungrily waved them goodbye.

Mort and Opal had not always been cannibalistic in their eating habits, though their children had grown up knowing nothing else.

Twenty years ago in 2087 they had been bright-eyed newlyweds from Los Angeles, lucky winners of a chance at homesteading on Mars with free transportation to Marsport, sixteen hundred square miles of virgin Martian desert that would be all theirs if they lived on it for twenty-five years, and a ready-made half-acre pressurized dome containing all the conveniences modern civilization could produce, with a nuclear powerplant that would produce all the power they needed automatically for several hundred years, a compact hydroponic shed that could turn out enough grains, fruits, and vegetables to supply an army, and two sows complete with a supply of sperm tubes for a never ending source of pork, the most efficiently produceable type of meat known to man.

Unfortunately the two sows had died after the first year and—probably due to a bookkeeping mishap—the Homestead Authority inspector had neglected to supply them with other sows. So they had become vegetarians by necessity after all the pork in the deepfreeze was gone . . . until Opal was going to have Genevieve.

Opal had gotten sick. Mort had cared for her as best he could. But day after day her craving for meat had increased until it was all she could think of.

Then had come the day that the inspector had come around again, and when Mort had demanded meat and the inspector had told him once again to be patient, something in Mort had snapped.

The next thing he knew, the inspector lay dead at his feet. Mort had looked down at the dead inspector, feeling his world of dreams crumble to ashes.

Then had come his inspiration. Opal knew nothing of this. She was asleep in the bedroom. She had to have meat. That was all there was to it, and what she didn't know wouldn't hurt her.

And it hadn't hurt her. She had raved with delight over the broiled steaks, the juicy roasts, and had believed Mort's story that the inspector had brought the meat on his visit—which was the truth, so far as it went.

After each meal Mort brought her in her sickbed he had hurried out to gag in private, unable to watch her. Then had come the day when she was well and resumed her duties as housewife, and prepared a meal herself, and there had been no way Mort could get out of eating with her.

He had forced the first bite into

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his mouth with his eyes closed. Then, to his immense surprise, had found it delicious. Also, as he realized later, meat from the deepfreeze lost any connection with its source and was, simply, meat, except that it was much tastier than their faint memories of pork.

Eventually it was gone. Genevieve had come, doing well at first until the meat ran out. All of them had been pretty sick when the young prospector had dropped in to visit, and had made the mistake of trying to make a pass at Opal.

What a worrisome time that had been! Mort had set about cutting him up into attractive cuts. Opal had nearly gone out of her mind—especially after Mort, in a fit of anger, had told her not only what, but who the meat had been that had saved her and the baby.

Then, slowly over the days, had come acceptance. The impersonalness of meat from a deepfreeze, coupled with its superiority of flavor once you got used to the idea, did it.

As the years went by and the other children came, it became a way of life. Normal. And of course the children knew nothing else.

Big oaks from little acorns grow, and that's the way it was. And now, visitors were coming!

The truck came in through the automatic airlock. The soft high-pitched whine of its turbines seemed to stir the very atmosphere, make it come alive.

The family stood in a group near the back door of the house and waited for the truck to drive up, trying to make out who was inside it, eyes round with the secret knowledge they shared.

Only Genevieve's eyes mirrored a secret longing. Opal, in the way of mothers, had thrust her impractical dreaming out of her mind, to be replaced by worry that there might be trouble, that one of her brood might be hurt before it was all over and the fresh meat was safely put away in the deepfreeze and the truck parked in one of the back buildings, out of sight.

The driver was visible behind the windshield now, a huge fleshy man.

"Oh boy, fat man," six-year-old Zeke laughed excitedly.

"Hush, Zeke," Opal said in stern warning.

Then the car was stopping in front of them and the only sound for a second was Genevieve's exclamation of pleased surprise as she saw the young man sitting beside the driver.

The car door slid inward a few inches and upward under the curve of the roof. The young man looked directly at Genevieve as he stepped out, and the look that passed between them was that of mutual recognition of a mutual admiration. Later looks that passed between them during the ensuing five or six seconds contained mutual recognition of a mutual need, or hunger, and further verification of mutual admiration, so that at the end of no more than seven seconds

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they had reached a mutual understanding often thought of as love at first sight if subsequent discoveries about each other don't upset the initial mutual guesses of such couples, such as the discovery by one that the other has an unpleasant voice, some grating habit, or, perhaps, cannibalistic tendencies.

Meanwhile the driver slid his bulk across the seat and stepped out, a magnificent figure of a man fully six feet tall with thirty-pound thighs if they weighed an ounce, excellent jowls, and biceps big as hams. Only his nose was thin—thin and finely bridged, between keenly perceptive blue eyes.

Mort, behind his open and friendly smile, was cognizant of the shrewd and dangerous intelligence of the fat man. However, he was not afraid of it. He merely accepted it at once and prepared to give the signal for the slaughtering at any unexpected moment, triggering well-practiced and always successful joint action of himself and his three oldest sons.

"Sure good to get out of the truck where you can stretch," the fat man said, grinning broadly. "I'm Pete Walters, and this is my son Bob. We're what you might call tourists, I guess."

"I'm Genevieve, Bob," Genevieve said to Bob, her voice tender.

"Welcome to our ranch," Mort said. "We're the Smiths. I'm Mort, this is my wife, Opal, my sons, Zeke, the baby of the family, Chad, Roy, Henry, and Lester. Genevieve, of course, Mary—but why take up the whole day naming off my brood? You're probably tired and hungry."

"That we are. That we are," Pete Walters said heartily.

"Well now," Opal took over, "come right in and we'll show you to your rooms so you can take a bath and put on some comfortable clothes. By that time dinner can be ready." Her voice was rich and warm.

"Well now," Pete said, "that's just fine. We could sure use a shower. Come on, Bob."

They all moved into the kitchen, with Genevieve and Bob somehow managing to be close to each other and accidentally to touch hands.

In the kitchen Genevieve demurely moved away from Bob, and Mort took charge of the guests, showing them to their rooms. When he returned Genevieve was ready for him.

"Father," she said firmly, "Bob is the man for me, and if you don't let me have him I'll—I'll *do* something."

Mort shook his head with equal firmness. "It wouldn't work and you know it," he said. "I'll tell you right now Pete Walters is the finest chunk of meat ever dropped in our lap and he isn't going to get away. That Bob has plenty of good red meat on him too."

"I couldn't stand the thought of some of the meat in the deepfreeze being Bob!" Genevieve said shrilly. "You can't do it. Father, I've got to have Bob. You're my father You've got to think of something."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mort shrugged. "You'll get over it," he growled. "There's things that work and things that don't work. Part of growing up is knowing things that won't work. This Bob seems to like you now, yes. But if he lived long enough to see you eating a steak off of his own father . . ." Mort shook his head sadly.

"We could go away," Genevieve said eagerly.

"And live on vegetables?" Mort snorted. "And you know how leathery beef is, and how pork fills your stomach and leaves you still hungry."

"Then you could help me, father," Genevieve pleaded. "He loves me. I know he loves me. You and the boys could make him eat until he got the *appetite*. Then he would love me again." Her voice vibrated with eagerness. "It would work, father. You know it would work."

Mort hesitated, reflecting on how he and Opal had taken to it—gotten the *appetite*. But they wouldn't have if it had meant eating his or Opal's father. He shuddered inwardly in revulsion at the horrible thought.

"If you don't say yes," Genevieve said warningly, *"I'll tell them about us."*

This was a mistake in tactics, and Genevieve knew it the moment she heard herself say it. Even little Zeke understood quite clearly that it would be the end of their happy existence if anyone ever got away, knowing their secret. So even as Mort and the two older boys leaped toward her she was backing away and saying, "I didn't mean it! I didn't mean it!"

Then Mort had his hand over her mouth and Chad and Roy were pinning her arms behind her.

"We'll have to tie her and gag her and leave her in her room until it's over," Mort said grimly.

Little Zeke began to cry. Opal picked him up and cradled him to her bosom. "Hush, Zekey," she whispered.

"Well well!" the voice of Pete Walters sounded from the doorway. "What goes on? A game?"

All eyes turned toward the bulking figure in the doorway. And in that instant of common peril individual differences were set aside to meet the potential threat. Mort took his hand away from Genevieve's mouth and the two boys released her arms and stepped away, ready for action.

"Not a game," Mort said. "Discipline. She was objecting to helping her mother prepare dinner. But what brings you back to the kitchen and this embarrassing scene so soon? We thought you would be taking your bath."

"I couldn't find the soap," Pete Walters said.

"Oh!" Opal said in sudden memory of her defection. She lowered Zeke to the floor and went into the storage room, coming back with two fresh bars.

When Pete Walters had gone, Mort looked sternly at Genevieve. "There

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will be no more nonsense," he said. Then, to the boys, "We'd better get them at the first opportunity. And no misses. It could get to be very nasty if there were, you know. That fat one could break your arm with a twist of his wrist."

With a loud wail of defeat and heartbreak, Genevieve ran out of the kitchen, and to her room. Opal followed swiftly, partly to make sure she didn't go to warn Bob, partly to comfort her.

But Genevieve refused to be comforted, so Opal returned to the kitchen and began to throw some vegetables together for a dinner.

Soon the fragrance of cooking vegetables spread through the kitchen. Mort ignored it. The children wrinkled their noses at it. And everyone sat around in an attitude of waiting.

At last the two guests came into the kitchen, pink-faced and clean shaven and sniffing with patent delight at the odor.

"Ahhh," the fat one said. "Fresh vegetables."

"Yes," Opal said. "It's all we have just now. I'm sorry we can't offer you some pork, but the truth is—"

"Quite all right. Quite all right, Mrs. Smith," he said heartily, going to one of the tables and sitting down, his huge bulk causing the chair to creak dangerously.

Bob Walters looked around the room, obviously looking for Genevieve. An angry look came into his eyes. He moved over to lean against the wall.

The boys, who had been waiting tensely for him to sit down, sighed softly. He could not very well be taken unawares the way he stood so it would be wiser to wait until he could.

"Have quite a trip, Walters?" Mort asked conversationally.

Subtly the room became less tense with this question. It reverted things to normal procedure.

"Quite a trip, Smith," the fat man said. "About eight hundred miles since the last stop."

Opal cleared her throat to gain attention. "Are you from Earth, or Marsport?" she asked.

The fat man chuckled. "Neither," he said. "Guess I forgot to mention. Have a ranch of my own. Bob and I got sort of restless, so we took off, leaving the Mrs. and the rest of the kids to take care of themselves. Can't tell, we might even take in Sin City before we go home. I've always had a hankering to go there and look in on a few of the four hundred and seventy-eight sins they boast about having. Ain't that right, Bob?"

"Could I go with them, father?" It was Genevieve, appearing in the doorway, and at once the kitchen was electrically tense again.

There was lipstick on her lips, making her look strange to those who had never seen her with it on before.

"My lands!" Opal exclaimed. "Where did you get *lipstick?*"

Genevieve tossed her head care-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lessly. "Oh, I had it," she said.

"You're beautiful!" Bob said, going toward her.

Chad and Roy saw their opportunity and sprang, expecting Mort to leap into action and take care of the fat man while they sapped his son.

Possibly it was the alarm in Genevieve's face that warned Bob. He doubled forward and carried his motion into a rolling tumble. The blackjacks in Chad's and Roy's hands whistled through the air.

Belatedly Mort leaped for the fat man, who by all rights should have been stunned with surprise. Instead, he reacted with deceptive speed, stiff-arming Mort, who staggered backward.

For an incredible instant there was no motion as the new state of affairs leaped into everyone's consciousness.

It was six-year-old Zeke who became the hero of the hour. Screaming with a mixture of fear and excitement he rushed at the fat man, flailing at his knee with tiny fists.

Snorting, the three hundred and fifty pounds of irate flesh heaved itself upward from the chair and reached out to crush the child. Opal leaped to the rescue with a hot skillet held in both hands as a weapon, the lid and hot grease and frying potatoes scattering behind her.

Chad and Roy rushed at Bob Walters again with blackjacks thumping against the wall as Bob sidestepped and rushed out of range.

With the bellow of an outraged bull Pete Walters took the blow of the descending frying pan on his forearm.

Mort had recovered his balance and rushed in now with raised blackjack.

"Out!" bellowed Pete Walters.

A blackjack grazed Bob's shoulder as he abandoned the fight and rushed toward the door to outside. His father was just ahead of him, and he barely paused in his flight as the door exploded outward, taking hinges and part of the frame with it.

"If they get away we're done for!" Mort screamed, rushing after them.

The entire family streamed through the wreckage of the doorway in time to see the fat man running in the direction of one of the outbuildings with incredible speed, and his son beside him. In a few seconds they were out of sight.

Mort came to a stop and slowly returned to his family, a thoughtful frown on his face.

"This sure poses a problem," he muttered. He turned angry eyes on Chad and Roy. "Why'd you start things the way you did?"

They shifted uncomfortably but didn't answer.

"The fat's in the fire," Mort muttered. "Nothing like this ever happened before. I don't know just what to do."

Genevieve was weeping silently.

"Shut up," Mort said mildly. "It's you that got us into this mess. You

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

and your growing up and wanting a man."

"What's she want a man for?" ten-year-old Lester asked.

"I love Bob!" Genevieve's sobbing burst into loud words.

"Hush, Genevieve," Opal said.

"I love Bob. *I love Bob.* I LOVE BOB!" Genevieve reiterated, her voice becoming a scream of despair.

"Oh for cripes sake!" Mort said, lifting his hand to backhand her across the face.

Genevieve evaded him, an act which was open treason. With a sob of desperation she darted around him and ran as fast as she could go in the direction Bob and his fat father had gone.

Chad and Roy started after her.

"Come on back!" Mort ordered. "Let her go—and good riddance!"

They watched her glumly as she disappeared around the outbuilding where Pete and Bob had vanished.

"What'll we do, father?" Chad said.

It was a question that went to the root of the difficulty. Logic dictated that Genevieve should now be classified with the strangers, to be slaughtered. But if that were done the seeds of insecurity would be sown, for then any of them would be fair game for the others and cannibalism would have become, not a way of life, but a cancerous growth that devoured itself and all with it.

The foundations of family security demanded that Genevieve be saved. The foundations of family security demanded that the strangers be butchered before they could escape.

For a long moment Mort and Opal looked into each other's eyes, seeing the long train of the past leading up to this moment, seeing the blank wall of the future, wishing things could have been different, knowing that even if they could have been, it was too late now.

But something had to be done. Mort thrust the past from his thoughts and tried to think what to do. Always before it had been so simple and uncomplicated. Surprise stunned people, and if they lived long enough to realize their fate, the horror of it held them paralyzed.

Not so this fat man, this bull of a man, Pete Walters, with his animal cunning. Mort realized suddenly that from the moment he had set eyes on the man he had been afraid of him—almost a premonition.

Once when Mort had been a child back on Earth he had been to a state fair and seen blooded bulls up close enough to hear their soft patient breathing, to reach out with child's fingers and touch their broad wet noses, to feel the pulse of immense strength in their thick shoulders.

Pete Walters was like that, and if Pete Walters were to come around that outbuilding at this moment in a slow trot and come toward him he knew he would turn and run for his life.

A figure did come into view. Mort's heart did a flip-flop before his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consciousness registered that it was Genevieve instead of Pete Walters.

Genevieve was running toward them, waving and calling. What was she saying?

"It's all right!" she was saying. "It's all right! It's all right!"

Opal, damn her, rushed forward and threw her arms around Genevieve, and woman and daughter were crying. Opal was saying, "My baby. My poor baby."

It didn't make sense.

And now the fat man and his son were in sight, walking slowly toward them, big grins on their faces. What was going on? What else had Genevieve said? It was—

Realization hit Mort between the eyes with blinding force. Genevieve had said, "They're like us!"

It didn't seem possible. Somehow, Mort had never considered the possibility of other homesteaders. He had thought his problems unique.

"Am I glad to meet you!" Pete Walters was calling happily as he came forward, holding out his hand.

For a moment Mort suspected a trick. Then, looking into the fat man's eyes, he knew suddenly that it wasn't a trick. Pete Walters was sincere.

Impulsively Mort grasped Pete's warm fleshy hand. They shook hands, while Mort told himself regretfully that he would have to forget about the finest hunk of meat he had ever met.

"Stop measuring me with your eyes," Pete said, chuckling throatily. "By god I should have known the minute you looked at me, but it just never occurred to me . . ."

"Me neither," Mort said.

They turned to look at Bob and Genevieve, arm in arm, with Genevieve's face radiating happiness.

"They sure make a nice couple," Mort said, choking up. "I wanted Genevieve to be happy, but I never thought . . ."

"Funny how things work out," Pete said gruffly. "Bob and I, we started out to round up some meat. Tourists don't get to us often enough. . . . Never thought we'd find people like us."

"Best thing that ever happened," Mort said. "Been kind of lonesome for us."

"Me too," Pete said, suppressing a sob of happiness.

"Well, children," Opal said, her voice too loud and too gay, "shall we return to the kitchen and start a proper dinner? And Genevieve," she called gayly. "It's time you started thinking about your duties as a housewife. Go to the deepfreeze and fetch Mrs. Johnson's thigh. And Lester, take little Zeke with you and run to the hydroponic shed and bring back two onions and a sprig of thyme. Run along now!"

She turned to Pete Walters and touched his thick wrist shyly with her hand, looking up at him. "What is Mrs. Walters like?" she asked softly, her lip trembling.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Science Stage

by WILLIAM MORRISON

SHINBONE ALLEY, LYRICS BY JOE Darion, music by George Kleinsinger, book by Joe Darion and Mel Brooks. Production designed by Eldon Elder, costumes by Motley, production supervised by Sawyer Falk. Presented by Peter Lawrence at The Broadway Theatre.

SHINBONE ALLEY makes due obeisance to Don Marquis, whose "archy and mehitabel" stories provided the leading characters, ideas for subsidiary ones, themes for songs, and a few tantalizing bits of philosophy as seen by a member of that unpopular species, *Blatta Orientalis*. Mr. Marquis provided no plot, and the collaborators in SHINBONE ALLEY didn't concoct much of one, but this has never proved an insurmountable handicap to a musical. There *are* funny scenes, amusing dialogue, enjoyable songs and generally pleasant music, and enough tantalizingly beautiful girls to make the average musical a success. You are justified, therefore, in asking why this one is struggling so hard to survive.

As I see the answer, it's threefold. First, it's difficult to identify yourself with a cockroach and a cat. Let the heroine of a musical be a prostitute, and immediately half the women in the audience feel close kinship (suppressed desires, I am forced to suppose). Let the hero be middle-aged, and a good many of the men who can afford to buy tickets say to themselves, "That's me" (unsuppressed desires). But what woman can feel empathy toward a cat, even a promiscuous one? What man sees himself in a cockroach, a free-versifying cockroach at that?

The problem may have little significance for us science fiction readers, who have learned to identify with cave men, bulging-browed midgets, and malicious monsters, and are accustomed to meeting ourselves racing around in time and space. But I am afraid that our less nimble-minded brethren have their troubles with the minor fauna of Earth.

Second, there's the music. It's good, it has rhythm, it has melody. Unfortunately, it is not quite the stuff of which present-day popular hits are made. Mr. Kleinsinger knocked 'em dead with *Tubby the Tuba* and *Peewee the Piccolo*. But SHINBONE ALLEY is competing with calypso and rock and roll, and so far it hasn't made the hit parade.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Let's get to our third point, and this is a weird one: For lack of an extra hundred thousand dollars or so, a trifle in the life of a musical, SHINBONE ALLEY didn't go for a three or four week road trial, as its more lucky fellows do. It was installed at the Broadway, started rehearsals, and after a week or so began to give previews, at which theatre-goers paid for an advance look. It may be pleasant to get paid for rehearsing, but it's sad when you spread the news that way that your show is horrible, and you are forced to agree. Changes were made from one night to the next. Scenes were interpolated, eliminated, expanded, cut, and juggled so often that no one was quite sure what sort of show would eventually emerge. By opening night, the show had jelled somewhat, but not enough. Alterations continued, and with them a slow gradual improvement. I understand that the night after my visit, a big new production number was scheduled for trial. By the time *you* see it, if you ever do, SHINBONE ALLEY may have achieved its ultimate form. Meanwhile, certain things are definite:

Eartha Kitt is a great performer. You should see her set Shakespeare to sex to get an idea of her talents, which are not revealed in her rendition of ordinary popular songs. Eddie Bracken is a very funny comedian, and does a masterful drunk scene as the Dylan Thomas of cockroaches.

Allegra Kent and Jacques d'Amboise are fine in a short ballet. Erik Rhodes is amusing as a tomcat of the theatre who teaches Miss Kitt the Method. From time to time the collaborators take their fantasy literally enough to do some fine cat- and cockroach-eye commentaries on human life, using both perceptive words and funny music. And that too is all to the good.

If SHINBONE ALLEY can overcome its too poor and humble start, it may have a long life ahead of it. Maybe even nine lives. I wish it luck.

HIDE AND SEEK, which opened on April 2 at the Barrymore Theatre, had these assets:

Noble intentions (to prove that if you look for the evil effects of atomic energy, you'll find them).

An effective opening scene, in which real water poured from a spout during a fake thunderstorm.

Geraldine Fitzgerald, Basil Rathbone, and Isobel Elsom, all of them potentially good performers.

Dolores Dorn-Heft, a pretty one.

Among the liabilities were:

A desperately polished, but unfortunately lousy script.

Inconsistent characters in a situation which was meant to be powerful but turned out to be foolish.

A happy ending, secured by means of as smashing an anticlimax as I have seen in many a season.

In all fairness, I should add that in the audience I did find two friends who stanchly insisted that they liked the play. It closed anyway.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Like so many of the newer s.f. writers, Les Cole comes from science fiction fandom, where he was noted as an amateur editor, as the organizer of the 1954 World Science Fiction Convention, and as the inventor of the great concept of the "relaxicon"—a convention with no program whatsoever. (His wife and occasional collaborator, Es, is celebrated for her cheesecake—and you may take that noun in either of its common senses.) He is also a writer of unparalleled perseverance: The ingenious tale you are about to read, here printed for the first time, was begun in 1938!

Tripod

by LES COLE

YESTERDAY I

THE FOLIAGE WAS DENSE, FAR MORE dense than back home. Its incredible thickness gave substance to the theory that here, indeed, was the planet of tropical ecology. Other conditions bore it out, too, with a vengeance. The heat was intense, intolerable; moisture was ever-present; humidity was constantly high.

Because of the gravity, movement, too, was difficult. He had the feeling of being chased by one of those hideous beasts and running to escape backwards through a highly viscous fluid.

It was crazy attempting this. The Brass in the Bureau may have been willing to try anything, but this was going too far. Several million miles too far. Better to die comfortably with the race and planet than die in torture here. It just wouldn't work, populating this planet, and he felt duty-bound so to report.

"Water, everywhere. Wherever I look I see it," thought qurO'lgin. "Imagine, *clouds* of moisture and fog. Everything drips. And hot? It's like living continually in a hatchery. But for my nipper the worst thing of all is the gravity. We'll never get used to it."

He topped a small rise, inadvertently staring for a second at a sun that looked nearly three times as large as it did from the red hills of home, the cool, dry hills. He dropped his auxiliary eyelids, cursing his mistake, and momentarily blinded swung around. When vision re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turned he checked the thin—"and thinning," he thought grimly—grey line of his team. Their spindly legs struggled even harder against the terrible gravity while they went up the slightest incline. The twelve-foot bodies brushed against the lowest limbs of the trees; the box-like gray thoraces oscillated convulsively in the thick atmosphere.

"Four left," mused qurO'lgin. "Just four of an original eight. What sort of a commander am I to lose so many? But what could I do? Two killed by the monster biped with the large head. Ht'ranld missing, lost, disappearing without a trace ar.d as good as dead on this world. The Classifier crushed during the mixup in the swamp by the beast with the unheard-of-bulk—so lacking in brain that it didn't know it had done the damage; didn't even know we'd killed it until it suddenly dropped.

"Half my team gone! Four good members that will take years to replace and train properly. Half! Fortunately, however, we're on the way home now. Won't stop for anything when we reach the ship—*what's that?*"

A cry, a terror-striker, rammed itself into his consciousness. With a start of recognition he urged the remnants of the party on. It was another biped. Fate wouldn't do that to him; it couldn't. They had barely enough left to fly the ship; another loss might maroon them here forever. It was to be a race to the ship with this entire world against them.

TOMORROW I

"This is Nixon, again, Commander," came the tinny voice through the radio. "Here's something else to add to the picture. I'm becoming more and more convinced that there was some sort of parallel evolution, at least culturally. The bugs had cities, parks, probably some kind of public transportation, art, and now we've found what appears to be a museum. Still no clue to their disappearance, though. I'll call you back later; this museum may be important. If there was a parallel cultural evolution, maybe we can find some sort of Rosetta stone for their ideographs. Nixon, out."

The inflexion in Nixon's voice transmitted through the radio a tenseness which the Commander was quick to note. Spot checks from the other two-man crews drifted in over the next hour or so, but Nixon's silence made them seem routine by comparison. Routine! As if any report of any object on Mars was routine. Still, why didn't that man call in?

Elkins' mind drifted back over the recent events he and the crew had undergone. The pitch of excitement seemed to rise ever upward in a spiral; would there be no climax?

"First, there was the take-off from Earth. The parties, the lines of well-wishers and prophets of doom, the long calculations, the worry over logistics, and the intensified training had combined to make life under-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stated, hectic. And added to that was the knowledge that this was the first try for a planet. We'd reached the Moon, sure, but that was some time ago and only 240,000 miles away. Not much, really.

"And then," he went on thinking, "there was the successful landing on Mars. And the almost immediate discovery of the traces of intelligent life. We hadn't expected that. This expedition wasn't equipped with a built-in anthropologist. The disappointment that followed was more or less natural. Cities all over the planet and no one or no thing in them. Pictures, yes. Lots of pictures. Maybe it'd be better if we didn't find them. Ugly beasties! But I guess I'd be no beauty in their eyes either. I wonder what happened to them."

Elkins was brought up, instantly alert. It *was* Nixon this time. "Commander! Good Lord, Commander! I can't describe this to you. We've found something. We'll bring it in. I want you to see this and tell *me* what it is! See you soon. Nixon, out."

TODAY I

He was a big man and stocky. He was over six two, with a shock of black hair, absolutely non-inspiring eyes, a square face and jaw, and shoulders like the proverbial truck driver's. Not at all the type you'd expect to be a dabbler in scientific philosophy, John Travis was a contradiction in more ways than one.

He came from a more than well-to-do family and was never involved in a materialistic struggle. That fact alone was important when it came to his interests, for he could indulge them. He'd never have found a commercial outfit to back research in the much maligned field of Time, and Travis was interested in Time; deeply, passionately interested in the good old Aristotelian concept of Time without the Space attached. Plain, unaltered, "pure" Time.

But "time and place" are awfully important factors in history. See Stephen Vincent Benét or John W. Campbell, Jr. What if the vacuum tube had been conceived twenty years before the necessary production refinements that accompanied it were arrived at? What if John Travis had been born twenty years before the necessary prior research was carried out, or born at the right time but without the proper financial freedom?

It began with *The Time Machine,* which he read at an early age. It seized his immature imagination, and frustration set in with a will: here was something he wanted that he couldn't have. It progressed through Donne. There was an interregnum of crackpotism, then a return to a thorough grounding in math and physics. Nowhere was there anything solid about Time.

But Travis was tenacious, and this explained one of the contradictions. A young man, who should have been clipping coupons, was instead

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

owlishly contemplating the time continuum and how to crack it.

The preoccupation with time brought him, among other things, a wife and family. It was at a party, and he had drunk too much, and talked too loudly, and the drink he was carrying had somehow ended up in the young lady's lap. So he sat down beside her and announced in serious tones, "Don't worry. I am going to invent a time machine; then I can go back and stop myself from doing that."

"Indeed," she said with raised eyebrows. "That is the most unconventional gambit I ever heard."

"What?" he blinked.

She laughed. "But if you invent such a machine and go back in time, won't you alter history? And then you won't have met me."

"Oh, no!" he said enthusiastically, warming to this wonderful understanding girl. "Not at all. That's a fallacy the average person mouths but doesn't understand. You can change history, but it isn't permanent. I mean, you wouldn't be aware of it. . . . Let me begin again.

"There's just so much energy in the universe. Now, I believe that if you go back in time, your mere presence creates a slightly different probability world all right; however, you put a certain amount of energy in the system and at best only that same amount will come out again. So, your different probability world with no energy to sustain it ceases to be. Then . . ."

YESTERDAY II

"It is literally the damndest planet I've ever seen. Too much and too many is about the best way I can think of to characterize it," qurO'lgin said. He spoke too soon, paring off the usual amenities and then, by way of apology, oscillated his thorax at Bosnicgh, curator of the Royal Museum and his elder. "That's why I had to give a nonrecommend to the Council."

"I am aware of what you said in your report," stated Bosnicgh. "But what about this thing you found?"

qurO'lgin paused, unhappily reliving the experience. "I'd just about given up hope. We had to struggle so to move, and the biped was just across the valley from us, moving fast. We topped the rise and then, happily, I saw the clearing and the ship. Fear overcame the gravity—fear and the fact that all we had to do was move a short distance down hill.

"Within moments I had the crew around the basal fins toward the entry ladder. Never had I seen them move faster. Behind came the roars of the beast, sounding nearer so quickly. And so slowly did my men go up that ladder! Finally the last man started up, and I was about to climb myself.

"Right then I noticed it, standing there. Even with the threat existing as it did, I couldn't help thinking what an idiot I'd been not to have noticed it before. I went for it—I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

couldn't help it. I was making my last gesture of scientific defiance to this world. Then came the climb, struggling with it, up the ladder. By then the ground was trembling with the rush of the beast's bulk. I was only halfway up and resigned myself to death.

"I heard the breathing and terrible roaring. I turned, on the ladder, to defend myself as best I could. There came a nasty scream and a ship-shaking thud. Impossibly the beast was sprawled out at the bottom. I looked up to see the Navigator standing in the entry, gun empty. He'd been first in, and with great presence of mind rolled up the heavy battery in time to finish the monster off."

"Fortunately you did bring it back." Bosnicgh's statement was something of a commendation.

qurO'lgin nodded. "I brought it back, but was it fortunate? It will necessitate another trip to explain matters."

"No!" The elder's statement was dogmatic. "All our energies must be devoted to saving the race—and another trip to Ikcos will not help in that direction. Perhaps some day we will be able to return to investigate more fully." It was a sop for the explorer, an idle hope to cling to.

"It *is* interesting, though," Bosnicgh added. "You say you are positive the planet is inhabited by only non-reasoning beasts?"

"Yes, I *know* there's no intelligent life on it."

"Yet you returned with an artifact. Well we'll study it, eventually. I'd like to now, but I'm dreadfully understaffed here at the museum. The Council has grabbed all my best men for the Big Job. I'll put your specimen in preservative. Then, in a few years . . ."

Bosnicgh was old and garrulous; he rambled on. QurO'lgin paid him no heed, for he wanted to leave, to be alone with his thoughts. A sudden sadness had enveloped him, and the cold seemed very penetrating. *Could* his race save themselves if they'd sunk this far? They were abandoning all scientific research to follow one idea: to save their own chitinous exoskeletons.

He thought again of the paradox: an artifact on a world where none could possibly exist. With frustration he pictured it—the rectangular solid on the tri-mount. Then he shook his head, thinking. "I'm afraid this is one mystery that'll never be solved. . . ."

TOMORROW II

Within a short time Nixon had returned to the ship, and he was in Elkins' cabin gesticulating wildly.

"Where is the what-is-it, Jack?" Elkins queried.

"Just a sec," he answered. "There's gotta be a buildup. It was a museum all right. The place was pretty badly run down, like all the buildings we've found. On the other hand, the Bugs gave special care to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

specimens. They had coated them with some sort of transparent plastic. Nearly all the coated material might have been left the day before yesterday, it was in such good shape. Well, we were making a hurry-up tour through the place, and we entered one small room. It was almost bare, but in the center, on a pedestal, stood this."

With a gesture, he opened the cabin door and nodded to the crew man standing outside. This man walked into the room carrying something. When Elkins got a good look, he gasped and turned white.

"Is this some sort of a joke, Nixon? No, I suppose it isn't. OK, the word is not the object; how does that get on Mars when there's been no prior known contact? You can carry that parallel cultural evolution idea just so far. And is that all that's represented of Earth?"

"All we could find, sir. Take a good look: it's completely coated with that plastic. What do you make of it?"

"Make of it?" Elkins snapped back. "What else *can* you make of such an affair?"

"You mean . . ." Nixon trailed off as the full implication reached him.

"I mean that though I'm no expert, I'd guess the Bugs died off a long time ago. A long, long time ago. Maybe a hundred thousand years ago or more. That's fact A.

"Fact B is the simple, indubitable statement that it"—he jerked a finger at the box-and-tripod shape—"was made on Earth!"

Elkins shook his head. "I'm afraid this is one mystery that'll never be solved. . . ."

TODAY II

Needless to say, she eventually married the strange young man, who, while the other couples were off in dark corners, spoke off the cuff for hours on the subject of Time.

At first she really didn't think he was serious about what he was doing. But as the years dragged past, she came to share his dream and the numerous disappointments accompanying it. Marge was no ordinary woman; she picked up the terminology quickly. She even dreamed her own dreams based on the altered-time philosophy: She wondered, as the world situation grew worse, whether they—and the family which came duly—could escape in time. She'd never suggested it to him, but if they could go far enough back so that when the probability world which they would create ceased to exist—when the two worlds snapped together again—perhaps they would be left at the point of merger.

Finally one day he called her to the lab (which oddly enough looked a great deal like Hollywood's conception of a time researcher's lab) and there it was. This particular model about which both of them

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

felt so excited looked quite familiar.

"That's it," he said, excitement in his voice. "We turn it on; it disappears for a moment, then reappears; and Man has conquered Time."

"Where is it going?" she asked.

He clapped his hand to his forehead. "What a dope! I've been so busy I forgot to set any specific arrival point. You name it."

She bit her thumbnail and mused. "How about the Jurassic? Most dramatic point in animal history I can think of. Gee, if it only will . . ."

Within moments he was ready. He took a deep breath, let it out slowly, and said, "I suppose I should say something historically suitable, but I am getting damned sick of saying historical things and then having no reason for them to be historical. Let's hope it works, honey."

He flipped the necessary switches.

And knew how the man felt when he'd answered correctly the big question on the quiz program.

The time machine was gone. Only the apparatus—the transformers and tubes, the bits of last-minute jury-rigged wiring—was left. That, and the mew of delight from Marge.

It wasn't until the victory celebration was over and some sense of sanity had returned that a puzzled frown appeared on his face. "It should be back by now." His mutter was grim.

She frowned. "I don't understand. Why will it disappear for only a moment or so? Don't you intend it to stay longer?"

"Of course—but that's one of the beauties of time paradoxes.

"We leave it at, say, X-minus-a-time-interval on a lovely spring day in the past. That is a definite action which comes to an end with the arrival. At X time we return to pick it up. That's another definite and separate action regardless of the continuity of duration from X-minus-a-time-interval to X. In theory, we should be able to send it out and have it return with *no* elapsed time here in the lab. Of course, there's absolute time used in travel, but that should be nearly nothing.

"It isn't right, but try to visualize it this way: Think of an isosceles triangle, with the apex representing the lab, and the base the duration from X-minus-a-time-interval to X. Now, we could move down one of the equidistant sides and deposit it at X-minus. Then we move down the other side and pick it up at X, *without having to travel along the base.*"

Marge tried to ease the shock. "OK, maybe it wasn't *quite* right, but don't give up now. You made it go one way at least."

"Can't understand it; the theory is all right, and it should have worked. I sent a plain old-fashioned movie camera mounted on a tripod back to the Jurassic, and it should have returned. Time travel can't be one way only."

He shook his head. "I'm afraid this is one mystery that'll never be solved. . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It took the transatlantic collaboration of two males to perpetrate what is probably the most heinous treason to the male sex yet committed in science fiction . . . and certainly the funniest.

The Day Everything Fell Down

by DAMON KNIGHT *and* H. KEN BULMER

ROY COCKRELL THRUST HIS KEEN nose and beady eye out from under the bedclothes, like a badger from its earth. He was broad awake: the reverberating rumble from below still echoed up the staircase. That would be the regular Wednesday morning avalanche. Cockrell rolled over briskly, with a perfunctory prayer for the hall floorboards—where dry rot was held at bay only by a flick of Woolworth's paint—and composed himself for further sleep.

In vain. The tin alarm clock, infernal machine, shut off for months, chose that moment to burst its mainspring with a hideous jangle in his right ear. That was the sensitive ear, the one that always filled up with muddy water when he swam, and disgorged it at inconvenient intervals for a fortnight after.

Grumbling, champing his bearded jaws, Cockrell chucked the thing into a corner and got out of bed. He hitched up his pajamas, wincing at the sound of another split seam. The pants did not fall, at any rate—he was too clever for them, using clothesline. The stairs were carpetless and lightless: that was all in order, but he really ought to knock down the nails. By the time he reached the front door, he was leaving a neat line of bloody footprints.

On the rug (half a defunct curtain) lay the usual volcanic pile of letters. As he stood gazing at them thoughtfully, portions of the ceiling plaster drifted down to whiten his hair. The front door had warped again, he noticed, leaving a three-inch gap through which the ambient atmosphere was entering. His shins were cold. He scooped up an armload of mail and carried it back down the corridor to the study. As he dumped the letters atop the mountain on his desk, he heard a fearful crash from the kitchen. That would be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the piled washing-up falling at last into the sink.

The dusty wall calendar said "March, 1999." It was later than March, surely—more like May or June. Garbage collection day any month now.

He went back for the rest of the mail. Nine-tenths of it was Estelle's, of course—shabby letters, addressed and re-addressed, some of them spilling out of their envelopes. Monaco, Nigeria, Venezuela, Newfoundland—Estelle had been a great traveler, especially toward the last.

The stovepipe had come loose from the kitchen wall again, loosing a small cascade of soot. Cockrell banged it into place with a crusted pot. He built a fire of picture-frames and deadwood, dipped water from the rain barrel outside, and soon had the powdered eggs frying merrily in the pan.

When he had eaten and dressed —a matter of ingenuity, this, using paper clips and rubber bands in place of buttons—he rambled outside, brushing the crumbs from his whiskers, and cheerfully inspected the street. Another lorry had gone smash down the embankment during the night; he remembered hearing the noise and half waking up. Some fool trying to get to London Spaceport, no doubt. He picked his way down the pavement, sniffing the morning air appreciatively, and looked the wreck over. Nobody there; the fellow must have got away all right.

Up the street, the roof of the disused knitting shop had fallen in; it made quite a hole. Two or three elms were down, too, sprawled across the sidewalk.

The day was mild; no wind to speak of, although the sky was a queer leaden color. He thought he might stroll down to the Red Lion, early though it was.

The pub was on the shadowy side of the street, and for a few moments, on entering, Cockrell couldn't see a thing. It was like a kind of low-ceilinged cave, full of agreeable malty smells, plus a few of a mustier nature. Something in the far corner stirred, set a glass down and said, "Ahh."

"Is that you, Holloway?"

"Over here. Mind the table."

Cockrell tripped and cursed, draping himself over a tilted tabletop.

"I fell on that one this morning," said Holloway. "Termites been at it, I suppose." He became visible as a grey blur in the darkness, with two lighter spots for eyes. "Take a pew."

"What are you drinking—porter?"

Holloway sighed. "Can't find any more porter. Driven to drinking whisky. Here." He handed Cockrell a glass. It was a lager glass that had lost its stem, but perfectly sound providing you didn't want to set it down anywhere.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Holloway poured; Cockrell drank.

They were ruminatively silent for a few minutes. Then Holloway said, "Running out of letters for you, Cockrell."

"I'll bring this lot over to you tomorrow."

"'Fyou would be so kind," Holloway said. "Gives me something to do. Going to be very drunken hereabouts, Cockrell, now that there's nothing but spirits."

"True."

"Man can't sit about drinking all his time. Would go soft."

"Right."

"Those Syrians," said Holloway with bitter disgust. He poured and drank again. "Why couldn't they keep in their own damn country?"

"Planet," said Cockrell.

"Well, whatever you call it. Should've wiped them off the map in the Crusades, 'fnot earlier."

"No, no, no," said Cockrell patiently. "You've got it wrong again. Not that kind of Syrians—Sirians from *Sirius*. You know, the star with the planet."

"Well, whatever *you* wish to call it," said Holloway. "Why could they not stop there?"

"Ah, now I agree with you," said Cockrell. He was feeling relaxed and comfortable. "Why indeed?" The gloom had lightened a little, so that he could see Holloway as a dim hunched shape with hair matted over its forehead. The bar counter was a stripe of denser darkness; a little grey light filtered in through the half-collapsed ceiling. The corners were nicely festooned with dusty cobwebs. It was quiet; you could hear yourself think.

"Fem'nists," said Holloway with scorn.

"No, matrists," Cockrell said. "Matriarchists. Gynaecocrats," he repeated with doleful unction.

"Well, whatever you call'm. A bunch of damn females that don't know their places, *I* say. Understand, no offense. Your wife may be your wife, but she's my sister. Wherever she may be."

"Umm," said Cockrell, staring up at the black ceiling.

"Now look here," said Holloway, stabbing the table with a half-visible forefinger. "Does it stand to reason that a woman can do anything better than a man?"

"Well, childbirth, that sort of thing."

"Oh, well, if you're going to talk smut."

They drank, feeling offended. A slow creaking sound came from overhead; dust cascaded down. The light from the hole in the ceiling grew a little stronger.

"That beam's going," said Holloway.

"Shouldn't be surprised," Cockrell answered. "Fetch the bottle."

As they came out into the pale sunlight, the roof collapsed behind them with a furious roar. Dust billowed into the street. They moved up a few yards to be clear of it,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and sat on a fallen trunk. "Have to scavenge there, when the air clears," said Cockrell.

"Glass all broken, probably." Blinking in the sunlight, Holloway was dusty and grey, like an old mole. "Best pub this side of London. Too damn bad, Cockrell. And those women said we men couldn't build anything without 'em. Built that, didn't we? Best damn pub this side of London."

"It *was*," said Cockrell gloomily. He reached for the bottle.

Holloway involuntarily tightened his grip. "And whose fault is that? Gone away—left us. Off to Syria."

"Sirius."

"Quite right. *Damn* serious. Nobody but you and me left, I daresay, in the whole South. Cockrell, have a drink."

"Thanks." Cockrell tipped the bottle up neatly, without bothering about glasses. The air was growing a trifle chilly; the warmth of the liquor was welcome. "All the same," he said after a moment, "Estelle did know how to make a decent beef pie."

Holloway grunted unwilling assent. "Here, give me that," he said. "Going to be very sober hereabouts, Cockrell, with nothing to drink."

He wiped his chin. "Just a plain Englishman, myself," he muttered. "I don't hold with all those Moon dances, and herbs, and whatnot. Told her, 'I shall never bow down t'your heathen superstitions.'"

Cockrell nodded, his whiskers trembling with eagerness. "So did I. I told her, 'You women have simply gone mad with power.' But she wouldn't listen. Hand in glove with the Sirians. Kept on organizing those mass meetings at Stonehenge, you know."

"*Don't* I know. 'We women built first houses, planted first corn, and so on and so on.' Enough to make you sick."

"I said to her," Cockrell reminisced dreamily, "'You can't turn the clock back, Estelle. I daresay you may be right about the way things were here a few thousand years ago,' I said, 'but we men are the masters now, and that's flat. And if you women don't like it,' I said, 'why, you can go to Sirius.'"

"Good!" said Holloway fiercely. "Good!"

"She said to me, 'You couldn't even darn your own socks.'"

Holloway laughed scornfully. "Socks! Does it matter? I put it to you, does it matter?" Something fell to the pavement with a *tick* —a hollow last-year's walnut—and rolled to Holloway's feet. The soles of his boots were beginning to part company with the uppers, and Cockrell could see his dirty toes nestling inside, like a family of mice.

"Socks!" said Holloway.

Up the street, there was a slow thunderous rumble as the cornice of the Merchants and Sailors Bank fell off, taking half the facing with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it. "You know what she had the 'dacity to say to me?" Holloway demanded. "Said, any man could play at piling up bricks or stones, but the only thing that ever held 'em together was the magnetic power of women. 'What about mortar?' I said. 'Sand and water,' she says to me. Says, 'F'we once left, Herbert, there wouldn't be a stick standing in a year's time.' "

Cockrell nodded his rueful assent. " 'We can get along without you,' we said."

Holloway drank and made a sour face. "And they said, 'Let's see you try.' "

There was a distant grinding, groaning sound, and looking up, Cockrell saw the big BBC tower majestically nodding. The ground jumped when it hit. The sidewalk was suddenly alive with ants, darting this way and that. They were all winged ones; that was an odd thing.

Meanwhile the church spire had begun to lean. The water tank on the hotel roof abruptly dropped out of sight, like the demon King in a pantomime; then the hotel itself seemed to break in the middle and jumble itself together. Raising his voice against the roaring sound, which was now practically continuous, Cockrell said, "Look out for that walnut, I believe it's coming down."

They hastily retreated. The walnut tree leaned jerkily, shaking down a few more desiccated nuts and an old bird's nest. The heavy roots came bulging out of the pavement like a bad tooth. The trunk leaned again, groaned and fell, with a crackling smash of branches.

"Slight earthquake," said Holloway nervously, as he dodged away from the leaning wall of the bakery; "or perhaps—" He flung his arms around Cockrell as they swayed together in the dancing street.

Over his shoulder, Cockrell saw the Free Library bend and pour itself onto the post office roof. There was a whacking great cloud of dust standing up into the sky to northward, and the roaring was so loud you couldn't think.

The bakery sat down suddenly with a tired *Whoomf*. Farther up, two tall new blocks of flats wearily leaned their heads together. Where they touched, they burst: bricks fountained, and buried mains leaped up to meet them with whistling white voices; lamp posts dripped down like burnt match sticks. There was a fitful squirming under Cockrell's feet, and he saw that the cobbles were sliding out of their places: the whole street was beginning to flow down the hill like water.

Dancing nimbly, embracing each other, they stayed upright as the world splintered around them. Buildings, trees, ants, towers, mice, dustbins, pots, dirty dishes, cobbles and all were tumbling, leaping, roaring down in one mingling,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

melting, torrential shout into the center of the earth. The earth itself seemed to be sinking, collapsing, growing smaller and smaller. . . .

Gently, as he and Holloway soared in the midst of the shrieking air, a massive dark shape loomed toward them. It was a tubular device, twenty feet long, shaped like a green arrow with three heads; it had a silvery glow about it, and a crackling, burnt smell. Through the open doorway, they could see an exasperated middle-aged woman with a towel around her head.

"You two!" she called in a penetrating voice. "Interrupting my spring cleaning! Well, come on, climb in. We've got a much better planet now, with *three* moons. *And* we've got to be there by five o'clock, or the dinner will be spoilt. Come along, now, both of you. We're going home!"

Cockrell and Holloway glanced at each other and sighed, not unhappily. "Yes, dear," they said.

If you enjoy FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, you will enjoy some of the other Mercury Publications:

- ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE—*The finest crime-mystery-detective stories. This month's issue features Hugh Pentecost's gripping novelet, "An End to Fear," plus hard-hitting tales by F. L. Wallace, Thomas Kyd, Rufus King, William Holder, Avram Davidson and others.*
- VENTURE—*Science fiction stories of action and adventure. This month includes Floyd Wallace's shocking "The Nevada Virus," Poul Anderson's powerful story of future revolution, "For the Duration," and a deeply moving tale by Avram Davidson. Plus stories by Mack Reynolds, Robert F. Young, and others—and Theodore Sturgeon on books.*
- MERCURY MYSTERY BOOK-MAGAZINE—*Jay Albert's featured original novel, "Five Hours to Live"—the story of a boy out for vengeance on the town that branded him a thief—is accompanied by a taut W. C. Gault story, plus pieces by Erle Stanley Gardner and others.*
- JONATHAN PRESS MYSTERY—*"The Basle Express," by Manning Coles. Abridged edition. British Agent Tommy Hambledon has his vacation interrupted by international gangsters out for blood, money and the free world's secrets. ". . . fast-paced and funny," says the San Francisco* News.
- BESTSELLER MYSTERY—*"The Black Angel," by Cornell Woolrich. Abridged edition. Alberta French set out to catch a killer and save her husband from the chair. She found the killer—then fell in love with him. "Packed with action . . ." says* The Saturday Review.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Of all the stories of the linguistics of first interstellar contact, I don't know an odder one—at once wildly impossible yet wholly self-consistent—than this:

Spanish Spoken

by DORIS P. BUCK

THE BASIC TROUBLE WITH OUTER space, thought Van, was that a man lost his sense of humor. That was definitely worse than giving up cigarettes to conserve oxygen; even worse than thinking of the time gap (eight years plus) that would stretch between a man and his girl when and if he returned on schedule from the neighborhood of Alpha Centauri. Van stared uncheered across the spaceship's cabin at Harrow and Barthold, still arguing whether Harrow's queen should have taken Barthold's pawn or moved to the bishop's fourth. They had argued that point with cold bitterness now for six months, earth-time. Four years ago, edging through the *Niña*'s airlocks, they would have hooted at taking such a matter seriously. If only they felt like hooting at something now. At anything. Instead they glowered.

The *Pinta*'s navigator was convinced that numbers ending in three were unlucky. Another crew member now did his work. The grapevine reported mutiny nipped in the bud on the flagship, on the Admiral's own *Santa María*. The Admiral himself and Van's captain had a private feud going. Yet these men had once, on a strong wave of faith oddly combined with new, amazing visions of technology, set out as bravely as Columbus.

Van, suspecting outer space was no suitable habitat for man, took from his uniform pouch the three ounces of personal possessions every one was allowed. He had not gone for light alloy chessmen or all-but-weightless musical instruments. Instead he cherished microfilmed books on Mexico in English and in Spanish. For a long time he did not know what impulse had made him take them. Now he believed that perhaps he was psychic, that all along he sensed his coming need to remember laughter when he was light-years from earth.

The best laughter Van personally

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

knew he had heard in Mexico. A girl's face swam before him, magnificently featured: huge dark eyes; proud aquiline nose; sweeping lashes; full, merry lips. He started to smile at the face, then grinned at himself. Here he was, on the First Interstellar Expedition, approaching the third brightest star in the heavens—a great gold-orange poppy in the strange reaches of space—and all that occupied him were memories of Mexican Tehuantepec.

He jolted back to the present as the lookout gave a cry. The telescope revealed a planet. A planet. A landing place. Possibly. Probably.

Effects varied from person to person. Harrow and Barthold told each other their discussion of chess strategy was merely postponed. Everyone in a position to issue orders issued them—except, of all people, the captain. His bookish face assumed a faraway look combined with intense concentration. Van, a mere civilian with the assimilated rank of Spacer First Class, could bark commands to nobody; so he tried, for the fun of the thing, to put himself in the captain's mind. The captain must be composing the speech that would go down in the history books. After all, it was the *Niña*'s lookout, who with his little telescope . . .

Poor scholarly captain, reckoning without the Admiral! The Admiral would have his mind on those history books, too. When the captain's half-murmuring lips snapped closed, Van wanted to wring his hand.

Two hours later the planet showed clearly as a globe not unlike earth, even to the presence of atmosphere. Two hours after that, the flagship radioed that every man would stand at attention; the Admiral had a few words to say. While the captain scowled, the Admiral said to them:

"On this historic occasion the sponsors of our expedition expect from every man the best he has to render. That is all."

"It had damn well better be," muttered Van.

The atmosphere was 21% oxygen by weight to roughly 79% nitrogen. That meant the expedition could breathe without masks. Landing offered little difficulty. The planet had one enormous plain covered with low plants of brownish lavender. A guy, Van decided, had nothing to do but reminisce while orbiting toward that prairie. A guy had to think of something while whirling through turbulent air or he was nauseated. Van tried to see a lovely bronzed face smiling for him. He would succeed momentarily, but somehow boyish pranks forced their way into his mind, perhaps because the spiraling space tender brought back dreadful feelings known when he was an overexcited airsick kid on a bumpy liner. Pranks. Pranks. He had to concentrate on *something*.

Before they were down, Van could almost hear his mother voicing flustered apologies for his doings when he was a five-year-old.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The tender bumped gently, rose a little, and settled. They were the first men to land in the system of a new star. The airlocks opened. A gangplank went down. The Admiral, sculpturesque head thrown back, planted the flag of the United States of America upon gray-violet soil, while they all stood—bareheaded and silent—in hot gold-orange light. A new world had called them. They had answered.

Van felt something rub like a cat against the calf of his leg. So softly that only he heard it, a voice murmured, *"Señor."*

Van almost turned a somersault. *I'm going crazy—like the navigator,* he told himself. *I thought someone was speaking Spanish. I'm going stark mad on a nameless planet over four light-years from earth.* He pinched himself, relieved to find it hurt.

The air eddied as it does over a hot road. He saw the speaker then: a squat thing, with a non-human face, tremendously impressive though only a foot and a half high. The creature smiled with surprising amiability.

"The *señor* would prefer me to talk Spanish, perhaps, not an Indian tongue?" it asked pleasantly. Van pinched himself a second time and remembered pictures in his microfilmed books. He was looking at an Aztec god. A carving from Mexico —only alive. He knew it couldn't be. He also knew it was. The combination of feelings was disturbing.

"Look, you-all," Van shouted. *"Aquí se habla*—I mean they speak Spanish here."

The Admiral turned a frozen face on Van. Then he too stared. After that he and all his men, protocol forgotten, crowded bug-eyed around Van and his god.

"Call me Aquí Se Habla Español, or Aquí for short," Van translated. He was briefly the hero of the occasion.

"Possibly," explained Aquí, "the *señores* might call me a god." Van saw the expedition getting Aquí's sounds, though only he could translate them. "In a way you are right, although"—Aquí looked engagingly modest—"presences live in this system whose powers exceed my own . . . though I am of course supreme here. I have been many times—no, forgive my exaggeration, several times to your earth. A charming place. But charming. Ah, the laughing brown girls in the jungles! Their little giggles of silver. Delightful. Delightful. I particularly enjoyed their worship."

He smiled at Van as he went on. "There was one . . . Such magnificence of feature. The proud nose. The huge dark eyes."

Van saw a face like that, but individualized: the chin a little too large, too firm perhaps for conventional beauty; but the girl more interesting as a person for that very reason. He saw a little mark, a mole beside her right eye, giving a piquant emphasis.

Aquí repeated, "There was one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

. . ." He smiled dreamily. "One lovelier than—how shall I say—than ordinary beauty. For she was a girl of great force. I can see every peculiarity of her face, and how beside her right eye . . ." His voice trailed off.

There must have been girls like that through the centuries, Van explained to himself. Ancestors, perhaps, of the girl he had loved, the girl who had Spanish as well as Indian blood in her veins.

The Admiral cleared his throat. "Your Supremacy, if that is the correct way to address you," he began in English while Van translated and the captain stared at Aquí as if he were something between a toad and a worm, "have we your . . . your serene permission to make scientific observations on this unfamiliar world? You have my word of honor, as representative of my great country, that we shall in no way harm the inhabitants." Almost necessarily the Admiral stooped as if talking to a small child. But he saluted gravely.

The grotesque figure returned the salute with equal seriousness. "My serene permission is granted. And it has pleased me to be addressed as Your Supremacy. Now, *señor,* my planet, such as it is, is yours."

"I thank Your Supremacy," said the Admiral. He stepped back with a slightly smug expression.

Again air eddied. But slowly. Massively. Van had a feeling that Aquí suddenly wanted to make himself impossibly tiny. Perhaps a presence more potent than a jungle god was about to reveal itself.

This time nothing materialized. No actual voice spoke. But Van knew that intelligence here had called across great gulfs of space to intelligence on earth, traveler to delaying fellow traveler. Mind had somehow signaled to mind.

He looked at the rest of the expedition. From Admiral to youngest spacer their minds, freed like his from fettering preoccupations of earth, were perhaps for the first time truly receptive. Every face registered the awakening of an unknown capacity.

In unbelievable clarity Van saw past scenes; like the meeting with Aquí, they seemed only a few moments old. Sometimes now, as if his mind blinked like an eye, all recollection disappeared. Sometimes he seemed to be learning of a race that had long ago discarded the clumsiness of flesh. But a wisdom great beyond condescension always brought Van's thoughts back to time—as he knew it on earth, past and present—and to another, a newer way of regarding time, time freed from measurement, independent of space. The two views coalesced. *Time,* thought Van with wonder, *has a new dimension. I have . . . I have . . . stereochronic perception. It's like getting out of Flatland into a world of solids. Only I'm not dealing with cubes and spheres but with order and progression.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His life was a fresh thing patterned like a dream: childhood, Mexico, the space voyage. Everything, including matter, transcended old concepts. He experienced *becoming* and *became* as if they were one. Reality took on new vividness and complexity. Speculation at its headiest grew into pure delight as he felt great rhythms sway the worlds. He was aware now of the turning earth that had produced him, and the immeasurably great turning of a galaxy which had produced that earth. In his own being he felt the forward thrust of star clouds; the ordered turbulence of spiral arms ablaze with condensations of sapphire; swirling about a red nucleus of older stars.

And he was also conscious of Aquí near the calf of his leg, doing a little swirling of his own. Van's concentration on the cosmos ceased as the disembodied wisdom gave out wisdom no longer. Flustered apology, nothing else. Van recalled his own mother.

The Admiral turned the color of a turkey's wattles as the whole crew got, *Guests! Invited guests! And that imp put them through paces!* Van missed something apparently beamed directly to Aquí. Then came, *Talk Spanish indeed! That child never in his life did anything but telepath.*

Aquí's squat little form dematerialized as it scuttled away with Something in hot pursuit. From far off came, *Just wait till I lay*—was it *hands?—on you!*

The Admiral shouted with laughter. Great roars of healing merriment shook the crews of the *Niña,* the *Pinta,* and the *Santa María* till every mother's son was breathless. Finally the Admiral wiped his eyes. "Captain." His hand was on the slighter man's shoulder. "That speech of mine . . . stuffy. Couldn't you do something better?"

"I'll try, sir." Scholarly eyes twinkled.

Harrow whispered, "Barthold, the pawn. I knew all along you were right."

"Forget it," Barthold whispered back. He beamed. "That kid . . . girls in the jungle . . . my planet is yours."

The *Pinta*'s navigator was saying between explosive gasps, "Fellows, when I decided threes were unlucky —" They did not let him finish. Everybody slapped him on the back, told him he was a great guy when he was himself, and they all laughed again uproariously.

There was no trouble with outer space, Van decided. No trouble at all. It even had shaggy dog stories. He smiled quietly to himself as the Admiral finally chuckled, "Now where did that Aquí get his ideas?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Recommended Reading

by ANTHONY BOUCHER

I WISH TO SUBMIT TO THE CONSIDERATION of lexicographers a new verb: ULVEL, *v.t.*, to homogenize; to render tasteless; to reduce to an indistinguishable and insipid mass. *v.i.*, to apply such a process, particularly to literature.

Ralph Ulveling, director of the library system of the city of Detroit, has earned the right to join Dr. Guillotin, M. de Silhouette and Captain Boycott as a word-source. It has long been known that American librarians were opposed to the Oz books of L. Frank Baum; but the mystique of that opposition has been hitherto somewhat nebulous. It remained for Mr. Ulveling, at a statewide Michigan library conference in April, to make things clear.

According to the Detroit *Times*, he "said the fairy tale [specifically THE WIZARD] by Frank Baum gave youth the wrong approach to life. He criticized the books for their 'negativism' and said that instead of setting a high goal they dragged young minds down to a cowardly level. He added: 'There is nothing uplifting or elevating about the Baum series. They do not compare in quality to fairy stories by Grimm and Anderson or to the thousands of other [*sic*] modern children's books we stock. The "Wizard of Oz" stories, written a half century ago, have no value.' "

(You may well pause to get your breath back after that whopping last statement.)

Now the oddest thing is that this ulveling is, in the first place, inaccurate. Although Baum set out merely to be cheerful, philosophy did keep breaking in. There certainly are moral values and socially useful lessons (plus even a little social satire) in the Oz books; I need only refer to the warm, meaningful display of the Scarecrow's intelligence, the Tin Woodman's sympathy and the Cowardly Lion's bravery as they go in quest of, respectively, brains, a heart and courage. What the library director means by "negativism" and "a cowardly level" I have no idea.

But for once accuracy is not too important; and one need not won-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

der whether Mr. Ulveling had bothered to read the books before making up his charges. Even if the Oz books were afflicted with "negativism" (whatever that is), are we to tolerate nothing in literature save the "uplifting or elevating"? (And remember that it is the shortest of steps from "Children should read only . . ." to "People should read only . . ."). Is a guaranteed sterilized positivism to outweigh imagination, humor, insight, fantasy—in short, creativity?

A great deal of further ulveling has been going on in Michigan. At an institute of juvenile librarians, one Mary Bobinski (according to the Lansing *State Journal*) said that the Oz books "have an entertaining appeal but do not broaden a child's horizon [!] or help youth to establish a genuine set of values for life." And Mildred Batchelder, executive secretary of the national association of children's librarians, condescendingly observed, "There is nothing really wrong with the Oz story, but the writing is bad; the book is poorly handled. . . . A modern publisher could have edited the original Baum manuscript into a much superior story." (Lyle Blair, director of the Michigan State University Press, notes that this "is rather like saying that if John Bunyan had had a good religious editor when he was writing THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS he would have come up with THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING.") But the words that strike most fearsomely, not only at Baum, but at everything you and I love in literature, are Mrs. Bobinski's: "THE WIZARD OF OZ is not realistic, it's not true to life."

You see now what an ulveled literature would be: a literature of "positivistic realism," lacking both imagination (not "true to life") and observation (which could hardly be always "uplifting").

As I said, there is nothing new about the distaste of librarians for Oz; and I suspect the above-mentioned Mr. Blair of fomenting at least some of this latest outburst of ulveling for his own purposes. For Mr. B.'s firm has just published THE WIZARD OF OZ & WHO HE WAS, by Russel B. Nye and Martin Gardner (Michigan State University Press, $3.75); and Baum himself (if he cared, which is unlikely) could not have asked a more absolute refutation of the librarians' charges.

Many of you, I hope, will remember Martin Gardner's long two-part article, *The Royal Historian of Oz* (F&SF, January-February, 1955), which was the first (and only) extensive biographical and critical study of L. Frank Baum to appear in any magazine, general or scholarly. The new book is largely an expansion of this F&SF piece, with a wealth of freshly discovered or corrected material. (No matter how many years a scholar puts in on a job, the key data start turning up only after first publication.) In addition to Gardner's contribution, which covers just about everything

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one could wish in the way of biography, bibliography and general Oziana, there is an admirably perceptive "appreciation" of the Oz books by Mr. Nye, chairman of the English Department at MSU, and the complete text of (to give it its full 1900 title) THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ, with the original pictures by W. W. Denslow.

Memory can be deceptive; and I felt it wise, in preparation for the war against ulveling, to reread this first Oz book. I hasten to assure you—in case you feel that so many librarians can't *all* be wrong and that your immature taste must have misled you—that THE WIZARD seems every whit as wonderful to me today as it did 40 years ago. Here is genuine fantasy, creative, funny, tender, exciting, surprising, delightful; and beside it the bulk of today's "authorized" juveniles in our field, which bear the *imprimatur* of the American Library Association, seems more sterile than ever.

The Baum book itself more than deserves this issue in permanent adult form (and I wonder how librarians are going to get out of buying this edition, with a university press imprint); and the Gardner-Nye contributions make this one of the most important critico-historical volumes yet published concerning Twentieth Century American fantasy.

[But my dear Professor Nye, how *could* you write, in a book most of which comes straight out of F&SF, "No magazine article on Baum has ever appeared, with the exception of a short piece by Thurber nearly twenty years ago"?]

Andre Norton, as you doubtless already know, is one successful writer of "authorized" juveniles who is not over-concerned with helping her readers "to establish a genuine set of values for life" and who is willing to leave uplift to the bra-designers. She is a storyteller of the first class. Her stories often cast new light upon people and society; but her primary concern is vigorous narrative entertainment. STAR BORN (World, $2.75) is one of her best—a sequel to THE STARS ARE OURS! (1954), which studies a pioneering culture on a remote planet a century after its isolation from Earth. The growing pains of the colony, its relations with the intelligent native races, its final contact with the mother-society from which it has grown apart—all these are seen through the adventures of a boy undergoing an adolescence-ritual of exploration, and revealed in terms of suspense and excitement. It's labeled "12 and up"; and you can safely extend that "up" to whatever your own age may be.

In adult s.f., top honors among new books might well go to Fritz Leiber's DESTINY TIMES THREE (Galaxy, 35¢), even though it was an *Astounding* two-parter back in 1945 and was reprinted in Martin Greenberg's FIVE S.F. NOVELS (Gnome, 1952). The latest form is, technically, its first separate book edition, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

highly welcome. Among Leiber's unfailingly excellent works it is probably surpassed only by GATHER, DARKNESS!; and it's hard to think of a more evocative and imaginative development of the multiple-universe theme.

Among books which are new in a less technical sense, you'll find the richest rewards in Alfred Bester's THE STARS MY DESTINATION (Signet, 35¢), serialized last year in *Galaxy*. Here is Bester at his most pyrotechnically dazzling, sounding impossibly like a combination of M. P. Shiel, Alexandre Dumas and A. E. van Vogt, with a sparkling profusion of gimmicks (verbal and scientific) which could be the envy and despair of any of them. The basic plot is that of THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO: The Convict's Revenge, or the acquisition of fantastic wealth and power as a means of executing vengeance. Set this plot in a teleporting society, add a telekinetic super-explosive, three extraordinary women and a wild talent latent in the avenging hero; and the result is so bubblingly inventive and so vividly melodramatic that one of the longest recent s.f. novels seems regrettably short.

Jack Vance's BIG PLANET (Avalon, $2.75), which appeared in *Startling* in 1952, has more in common with Baum than with Bester. What plot there is is simple and its solution oversimplified; the book's narrative interest and charm, which are great, lie in the Baum device of setting out on a trek, meeting strange kinds of people on the way and having unexpected incidental adventures . . . in short, following the Yellow Brick Road. Big Planet is an anarchic world inhabited, in voluntary or involuntary exile, by misfits from the conformist culture of Earth; almost anything is apt to turn up, and Mr. Vance is ceaselessly inventive and entertaining, especially in the fine episode of Kirstendale, which enjoys an entirely new (and enviably logical) economic system.

Hal Clement's CYCLE OF FIRE (Ballantine, $2.75; paper 35¢) starts off in the Yellow Brick Road method, and well, as a stranded Earth scout makes first contact with a native of a remote planet and accompanies him on a mysterious pilgrimage demanded, apparently, both by his culture and by his biologic makeup. But soon the rest of the Earth expedition gets back in touch; people start talking and things stop happening. It is, as one expects from Mr. Clement, highly intelligent and stimulating talk, acutely analyzing the effects of just such a planet of just such a double sun upon the metabolism, morphology and psychology of its inhabitants; in a sense this is science fiction at its truest and purest. In MISSION OF GRAVITY Clement balanced such science with enough fiction to produce a masterpiece; this time the science preponderates, and ponderously, but the book is still intensely absorbing—if you're not particular about narrative

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

movement or niceties of character study.

Robert Silverberg's first adult s.f. novel, THE 13TH IMMORTAL (Ace, 35¢), is disappointing—a sketchy melodrama of palace politics in a feudal post-Atomic world. In the best van Vogt tradition, everybody turns out to be somebody else, but without occasioning much surprise; and the book is so short that Silverberg has no space to develop (or indeed to depict) his characters or to do more than glance at a half dozen incidental themes, many of them appealing. The same double-book includes a slightly abridged reprint of James E. Gunn's THIS FORTRESS WORLD (1955).

Charles Eric Maine's THE ISOTOPE MAN (Lippincott, $3) is published as a suspense novel, and probably rightly so. For completists, it should be noted that it *is* s.f., involving surprising radiation-effects and a type of amnesia resulting from dislocation in time; but the emphasis is on pursuit and excitement. This story of exposing an impostor at a secret British research installation is, as s.f., fairly foolish; as a wild chase-thriller it's a good deal of fun.

Also on the fantasy-suspense borderline lies FIRE, BURN! (Harper, $3.50), the third of John Dickson Carr's astonishing fusions of time travel and deduction. This time a Scotland Yarder of today slips into 1829, when the Metropolitan Police of London were being first established, against intense popular opposition to "Peel's bloody gang." Upon Superintendent Cheviot's solution of an "impossible" murder depends not only his own happiness in an alien era, but the popular recognition and future success of the Yard itself. The book's only weakness is, puristically, as a time-fantasy. As Cheviot himself muses, "Even in time-trickeries there must be a how and a why"; and Mr. Carr has not been generous in providing these essentials. Otherwise the novel is a joy, with a fine love story, a grand detective puzzle, bounteous action and suspense, and a lively, living picture of English history between the Regency and the early Victorian Age—in all, Carr's best book since THE DEVIL IN VELVET (1951).

Important recent reprints, of the non-newsstand variety, include Algernon Blackwood's IN THE REALM OF TERROR (Pantheon, $3.95) and a new paperbound edition of THE PORTABLE EDGAR ALLAN POE (Viking, $1.45). The Blackwood volume contains 8 stories, from 5 of his various collections (1906-1914), largely familiar from many anthologizations, but chiefly unarguable masterpieces of occult fiction. The Poe is well worth acquiring, even if you have other Poe collections, both for its wide range of material (letters, critiques, articles, etc., as well as tales and poems) and for the acuity of Philip Van Doren Stern's editorial comments on the man who, in Stern's words, "made death's doings his own."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We began this issue with a grim picture of lunar life, and now round it out with a bright and happy one—obviously belonging to a later period of extraterrestrial colonization. "The major technical problem in writing science fiction," Heinlein has written, "is the extreme difficulty of building up a complex, strange background sufficiently to produce empathy and flavor without letting the stage dressing get in the way of the story." This is why, the author frankly confesses, he rarely writes anything under book-length; but in this one of his very scarce shorter pieces, he brings off the characteristic Heinleinesque feat of telling an entertaining human story while creating a whole other culture and technology. The former features a singularly captivating young heroine; the latter entails (like Malcolm Jameson's neglected classic, Bullard Reflects*) the wonderfully detailed realization of a new sport, possible to men only when they have left this planet.*

The Menace from Earth

by ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

My name is Holly Jones and I'm fifteen. I'm very intelligent but it doesn't show, because I look like an underdone angel. Insipid.

I was born right here in Luna City, which seems to surprise Earthside types. Actually, I'm third generation; my grandparents pioneered in Site One, where the Memorial is. I live with my parents in Artemis Apartments, the new co-op in Pressure Five, eight hundred feet down near City Hall. But I'm not there much; I'm too busy.

Mornings I attend Tech High and afternoons I study or go flying with Jeff Hardesty—he's my partner—or whenever a tourist ship is in I guide groundhogs. This day the *Gripsholm* grounded at noon so I went straight from school to American Express.

The first gaggle of tourists was trickling in from Quarantine but I didn't push forward as Mr. Dorcas, the manager, knows I'm the best. Guiding is just temporary (I'm really a spaceship designer), but if you're doing a job you ought to do it well.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Dorcas spotted me. "Holly! Here, please. Miss Brentwood, Holly Jones will be your guide."

"'Holly,'" she repeated. "What a quaint name. Are you really a guide, dear?"

I'm tolerant of groundhogs—some of my best friends are from Earth. As Daddy says, being born on Luna is luck, not judgment, and most people Earthside are stuck there. After all, Jesus and Gautama Buddha and Dr. Einstein were all groundhogs.

But they can be irritating. If high school kids weren't guides, whom could they hire? "My license says so," I said briskly and looked her over the way she was looking me over.

Her face was sort of familiar and I thought perhaps I had seen her picture in those society things you see in Earthside magazines—one of the rich playgirls we get too many of. She was almost loathsomely lovely . . . nylon skin, soft, wavy, silver-blond hair, basic specs about 35-24-34 and enough this and that to make me feel like a matchstick drawing, a low intimate voice and everything necessary to make plainer females think about pacts with the Devil. But I did not feel apprehensive; she was a groundhog and groundhogs don't count.

"All city guides are girls," Mr. Dorcas explained. "Holly is very competent."

"Oh, I'm sure," she answered quickly and went into tourist routine number one: surprise that a guide was needed just to find her hotel, amazement at no taxicabs, same for no porters, and raised eyebrows at the prospect of two girls walking alone through "an underground city."

Mr. Dorcas was patient, ending with: "Miss Brentwood, Luna City is the only metropolis in the Solar System where a woman is really safe—no dark alleys, no deserted neighborhoods, no criminal element."

I didn't listen; I just held out my tariff card for Mr. Dorcas to stamp and picked up her bags. Guides shouldn't carry bags and most tourists are delighted to experience the fact that their thirty-pound allowance weighs only five pounds. But I wanted to get her moving.

We were in the tunnel outside and me with a foot on the slidebelt when she stopped. "I forgot! I want a city map."

"None available."

"Really?"

"There's only one. That's why you need a guide."

"But why don't they supply them? Or would that throw you guides out of work?"

See? "You think guiding is makework? Miss Brentwood, labor is so scarce they'd hire monkeys if they could."

"Then why not print maps?"

"Because Luna City isn't flat like—" I almost said, "—groundhog cities," but I caught myself.

"—like Earthside cities," I went

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on. "All you saw from space was the meteor shield. Underneath it spreads out and goes down for miles in a dozen pressure zones."

"Yes, I know, but why not a map for each level?"

Groundhogs always say, "Yes, I know, but—"

"I can show you the one city map. It's a stereo tank twenty feet high and even so all you see clearly are big things like the Hall of the Mountain King and hydroponics farms and the Bats' Cave."

"'The Bats' Cave,'" she repeated. "That's where they fly, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's where we fly.

"Oh, I want to see it!"

"OK. It first . . . or the city map?"

She decided to go to her hotel first. The regular route to the Zurich is to slide up and west through Gray's Tunnel past the Martian Embassy, get off at the Mormon Temple, and take a pressure lock down to Diana Boulevard. But I know all the shortcuts; we got off at Macy-Gimbel Upper to go down their personnel hoist. I thought she would enjoy it.

But when I told her to grab a hand grip as it dropped past her, she peered down the shaft and edged back. "You're joking."

I was about to take her back the regular way when a neighbor of ours came down the hoist. I said, "Hello, Mrs. Greenberg," and she called back, "Hi, Holly. How are your folks?"

Susie Greenberg is more than plump. She was hanging by one hand with young David tucked in her other arm and holding the *Daily Lunatic,* reading as she dropped. Miss Brentwood stared, bit her lip, and said, "How do I do it?"

I said, "Oh, use both hands; I'll take the bags." I tied the handles together with my hanky and went first.

She was shaking when we got to the bottom. "Goodness, Holly, how do you stand it? Don't you get homesick?"

Tourist question number six. . . . I said, "I've been to Earth," and let it drop. Two years ago Mother made me visit my aunt in Omaha and I was *miserable*—hot and cold and dirty and beset by creepy-crawlies. I weighed a ton and I ached and my aunt was always chivvying me to go outdoors and exercise when all I wanted was to crawl into a tub and be quietly wretched. And I had hay fever. Probably you've never heard of hay fever—you don't die but you wish you could.

I was supposed to go to a girls' boarding school but I phoned Daddy and told him I was desperate and he let me come home. What groundhogs can't understand is that *they* live in savagery. But groundhogs are groundhogs and loonies are loonies and never the twain shall meet.

Like all the best hotels the Zurich is in Pressure One on the west side so that it can have a view of Earth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I helped Miss Brentwood register with the roboclerk and found her room; it had its own port. She went straight to it, began staring at Earth and going *ooh!* and *aah!*

I glanced past her and saw that it was a few minutes past thirteen; sunset sliced straight down the tip of India—early enough to snag another client. "Will that be all, Miss Brentwood?"

Instead of answering she said in an awed voice, "Holly, isn't that the most beautiful sight you ever saw?"

"It's nice," I agreed. The view on that side is monotonous except for Earth hanging in the sky—but Earth is what tourists always look at even though they've just left it. Still, Earth is pretty. The changing weather is interesting if you don't have to be in it. Did you ever endure a summer in Omaha?

"It's gorgeous," she whispered.

"Sure," I agreed. "Do you want to go somewhere? Or will you sign my card?"

"What? Excuse me, I was daydreaming. No, not right now—yes, I do! Holly, I want to go out *there!* I must! Is there time? How much longer will it be light?"

"Huh? It's two days to sunset."

She looked startled. "How quaint. Holly, can you get us space suits? I've got to go outside."

I didn't wince—I'm used to tourist talk. I suppose a pressure suit looks like a space suit to them. I simply said, "We girls aren't licensed outside. But I can phone a friend."

Jeff Hardesty is my partner in spaceship designing, so I throw business his way. Jeff is eighteen and already in Goddard Institute, but I'm pushing hard to catch up so that we can set up offices for our firm: "Jones & Hardesty, Spaceship Engineers." I'm very bright in mathematics, which is everything in space engineering, so I'll get my degree pretty fast. Meanwhile we design ships anyhow.

I didn't tell Miss Brentwood this, as tourists think that a girl my age can't possibly be a spaceship designer.

Jeff has arranged his classes to let him guide on Tuesdays and Thursdays; he waits at West City Lock and studies between clients. I reached him on the lockmaster's phone. Jeff grinned and said, "Hi, Scale Model."

"Hi, Penalty Weight. Free to take a client?"

"Well, I was supposed to guide a family party, but they're late."

"Cancel them. Miss Brentwood . . . step into pickup, please. This is Mr. Hardesty."

Jeff's eyes widened and I felt uneasy. But it did not occur to me that Jeff could be attracted by a *groundhog* . . . even though it is conceded that men are robot slaves of their body chemistry in such matters. I knew she was exceptionally decorative, but it was unthinkable that Jeff could be captivated by any groundhog, no matter how well designed. They don't speak our language!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I am not romantic about Jeff; we are simply partners. But anything that affects Jones & Hardesty affects me.

When we joined him at West Lock he almost stepped on his tongue in a disgusting display of adolescent rut. I was ashamed of him and, for the first time, apprehensive. Why are males so childish?

Miss Brentwood didn't seem to mind his behavior. Jeff is a big hulk; suited up for outside he looks like a Frost Giant from *Das Rheingold;* she smiled up at him and thanked him for changing his schedule. He looked even sillier and told her it was a pleasure.

I keep my pressure suit at West Lock so that when I switch a client to Jeff he can invite me to come along for the walk. This time he hardly spoke to me after that platinum menace was in sight. But I helped her pick out a suit and took her into the dressing room and fitted it. Those rental suits take careful adjusting or they will pinch you in tender places once out in vacuum . . . besides those things about them that one girl ought to explain to another.

When I came out with her, not wearing my own, Jeff didn't even ask why I hadn't suited up—he took her arm and started toward the lock. I had to butt in to get her to sign my tariff card.

The days that followed were the longest in my life. I saw Jeff only once . . . on the slidebelt in Diana Boulevard, going the other way. She was with him.

Though I saw him but once, I knew what was going on. He was cutting classes and three nights running he took her to the Earthview Room of the Duncan Hines. None of my business!—I hope she had more luck teaching him to dance than I had. Jeff is a free citizen and if he wanted to make an utter fool of himself neglecting school and losing sleep over an upholstered groundhog that was his business.

But he should not have neglected the firm's business!

Jones & Hardesty had a tremendous backlog because we were designing Starship *Prometheus.* This project we had been slaving over for a year, flying not more than twice a week in order to devote time to it—and that's a sacrifice.

Of course you can't build a starship today, because of the power plant. But Daddy thinks that there will soon be a technological breakthrough and mass-conversion power plants will be built—which means starships. Daddy ought to know—he's Luna Chief Engineer for Space Lanes and Fermi Lecturer at Goddard Institute. So Jeff and I are designing a self-supporting interstellar ship on that assumption: quarters, auxiliaries, surgery, labs—everything.

Daddy thinks it's just practice but Mother knows better—Mother is a mathematical chemist for General

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Synthetics of Luna and is nearly as smart as I am. She realizes that Jones & Hardesty plans to be ready with a finished proposal while other designers are still floundering.

Which was why I was furious with Jeff for wasting time over this creature. We had been working every possible chance. Jeff would show up after dinner, we would finish our homework, then get down to real work, the *Prometheus* . . . checking each other's computations, fighting bitterly over details, and having a wonderful time. But the very day I introduced him to Ariel Brentwood, he failed to appear. I had finished my lessons and was wondering whether to start or wait for him—we were making a radical change in power plant shielding—when his mother phoned me. "Jeff asked me to call you, dear. He's having dinner with a tourist client and can't come over."

Mrs. Hardesty was watching me so I looked puzzled and said, "Jeff thought I was expecting him? He has his dates mixed." I don't think she believed me; she agreed too quickly.

All that week I was slowly convinced against my will that Jones & Hardesty was being liquidated. Jeff didn't break any more dates—how can you break a date that hasn't been made?—but we always went flying Thursday afternoons unless one of us was guiding. He didn't call. Oh, I know where he was; he took her iceskating in Fingal's Cave.

I stayed home and worked on the *Prometheus,* recalculating masses and moment arms for hydroponics and stores on the basis of the shielding change. But I made mistakes and twice I had to look up logarithms instead of remembering . . . I was so used to wrangling with Jeff over everything that I just couldn't function.

Presently I looked at the name plate of the sheet I was revising. "Jones & Hardesty" it read, like all the rest. I said to myself, "Holly Jones, quit bluffing; this may be The End. You knew that someday Jeff would fall for somebody."

"Of course . . . but not a *groundhog.*"

"But he *did.* What kind of an engineer are you if you can't face facts? She's beautiful and rich—she'll get her father to give him a job Earthside. You hear me? *Earthside!* So you look for another partner . . . or go into business on your own."

I erased "Jones & Hardesty" and lettered "Jones & Company" and stared at it. Then I started to erase that, too—but it smeared; I had dripped a tear on it. Which was ridiculous!

The following Tuesday both Daddy and Mother were home for lunch which was unusual as Daddy lunches at the spaceport. Now Daddy can't even see you unless you're a spaceship but that day he picked to notice that I had dialed only a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

salad and hadn't finished it. "That plate is about eight hundred calories short," he said, peering at it. "You can't boost without fuel—aren't you well?"

"Quite well, thank you," I answered with dignity.

"Mmm . . . now that I think back, you've been moping for several days. Maybe you need a checkup." He looked at Mother.

"I do not either need a checkup!" I had *not* been moping—doesn't a woman have a right not to chatter?

But I hate to have doctors poking at me so I added, "It happens I'm eating lightly because I'm going flying this afternoon. But if you insist, I'll order pot roast and potatoes and sleep instead!"

"Easy, punkin'," he answered gently. "I didn't mean to intrude. Get yourself a snack when you're through . . . and say hello to Jeff for me."

I simply answered, "OK," and asked to be excused; I was humiliated by the assumption that I couldn't fly without Mr. Jefferson Hardesty but did not wish to discuss it.

Daddy called after me, "Don't be late for dinner," and Mother said, "Now, Jacob—" and to me, "Fly until you're tired, dear; you haven't been getting much exercise. I'll leave your dinner in the warmer. Anything you'd like?"

"No, whatever you dial for yourself." I just wasn't interested in food, which isn't like me. As I headed for Bats' Cave I wondered if I had caught something. But my cheeks didn't feel warm and my stomach wasn't upset even if I wasn't hungry.

Then I had a horrible thought. Could it be that I was jealous? *Me?*

It was unthinkable. I am not romantic; I am a career woman. Jeff had been my partner and pal, and under my guidance he could have become a great spaceship designer, but our relationship was straightforward . . . a mutual respect for each other's abilities, with never any of that lovey-dovey stuff. A career woman can't afford such things—why, look at all the professional time Mother had lost over having me!

No, I couldn't be jealous; I was simply worried sick because my partner had become involved with a groundhog. Jeff isn't bright about women and, besides, he's never been to Earth and has illusions about it. If she lured him Earthside, Jones & Hardesty was finished.

And somehow, "Jones & Company" wasn't a substitute: the *Prometheus* might never be built.

I was at Bats' Cave when I reached this dismal conclusion. I didn't feel like flying but I went to the locker room and got my wings anyhow.

Most of the stuff written about Bats' Cave gives a wrong impression. It's the air storage tank for the city, just like all the colonies have —the place where the scavenger pumps, deep down, deliver the air until it's needed. We just happen to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be lucky enough to have one big enough to fly in. But it never was built, or anything like that; it's just a big volcanic bubble, two miles across, and if it had broken through, way back when, it would have been a crater.

Tourists sometimes pity us loonies because we have no chance to swim. Well, I tried it in Omaha and got water up my nose and scared myself silly. Water is for drinking, not playing in; I'll take flying. I've heard groundhogs say, oh yes, they had "flown," many times. But that's not *flying*. I did what they talk about, between White Sands and Omaha. I felt awful and got sick. Those things aren't safe.

I left my shoes and skirt in the locker room and slipped my tail surfaces on my feet, then zipped into my wings and got someone to tighten the shoulder straps. My wings aren't ready-made condors; they are Storer-Gulls, custom-made for my weight distribution and dimensions. I've cost Daddy a pretty penny in wings, outgrowing them so often, but these latest I bought myself with guide fees.

They're lovely!—titanalloy struts as light and strong as bird bones, tension-compensated wrist-pinion and shoulder joints, natural action in the alula slots, and automatic flap action in stalling. The wing skeleton is dressed in styrene feather-foils with individual quilling of scapulars and primaries. They almost fly themselves.

I folded my wings and went into the lock. While it was cycling I opened my left wing and thumbed the alula control—I had noticed a tendency to sideslip the last time I was airborne. But the alula opened properly and I decided I must have been overcontrolling, easy to do with Storer-Gulls; they're extremely maneuverable. Then the door showed green and I folded the wing and hurried out, while glancing at the barometer. Seventeen pounds—two more than Earth sea-level and nearly twice what we use in the city; even an ostrich could fly in that. I perked up and felt sorry for all groundhogs, tied down by six times proper weight, who never, never, *never* could fly.

Not even I could, on Earth. My wing loading is less than a pound per square foot, as wings and all I weigh less than twenty pounds. Earthside that would be over a hundred pounds and I could flap forever and never get off the ground.

I felt so good that I forgot about Jeff and his weakness. I spread my wings, ran a few steps, warped for lift and grabbed air—lifted my feet and was airborne.

I sculled gently and let myself glide toward the air intake at the middle of the floor—the Baby's Ladder, we call it, because you can ride the updraft clear to the roof, half a mile above, and never move a wing. When I felt it I leaned right, spoiling with right primaries, corrected, and settled in a counterclockwise

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

soaring glide and let it carry me toward the roof.

A couple of hundred feet up, I looked around. The cave was almost empty, not more than two hundred in the air and half that perched or on the ground—room enough for didoes. So as soon as I was up five hundred feet I leaned out of the updraft and began to beat. Gliding is no effort but flying is as hard work as you care to make it. In gliding I support a mere ten pounds on each arm—shucks, on Earth you work harder than that lying in bed. The lift that keeps you in the air doesn't take any work; you get it free from the shape of your wings just as long as there is air pouring past them.

Even without an updraft all a level glide takes is gentle sculling with your finger tips to maintain air speed; a feeble old lady could do it. The lift comes from differential air pressures but you don't have to understand it; you just scull a little and the air supports you, as if you were lying in an utterly perfect bed. Sculling keeps you moving forward just like sculling a rowboat . . . or so I'm told; I've never been in a rowboat. I had a chance to in Nebraska but I'm not that foolhardy.

But when you're really flying, you scull with forearms as well as hands and add power with your shoulder muscles. Instead of only the outer quills of your primaries changing pitch (as in gliding), now your primaries and secondaries clear back to the joint warp sharply on each downbeat and recovery; they no longer lift, they force you forward —while your weight is carried by your scapulars, up under your armpits.

So you fly faster, or climb, or both, through controlling the angle of attack with your feet—with the tail surfaces you wear on your feet, I mean.

Oh dear, this sounds complicated and isn't—you just *do* it. You fly exactly as a bird flies. Baby birds can learn it and they aren't very bright. Anyhow, it's easy as breathing after you learn . . . and more fun than you can imagine!

I climbed to the roof with powerful beats, increasing my angle of attack and slotting my alulae for lift without burble—climbing at an angle that would stall most fliers. I'm little but it's all muscle and I've been flying since I was six. Once up there I glided and looked around. Down at the floor near the south wall tourists were trying glide wings —if you call those things "wings." Along the west wall the visitors' gallery was loaded with goggling tourists. I wondered if Jeff and his Circe character were there and decided to go down and find out.

So I went into a steep dive and swooped toward the gallery, leveled off and flew very fast along it. I didn't spot Jeff and his groundhoggess but I wasn't watching where I was going and overtook another flier, almost collided. I glimpsed him

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

just in time to stall and drop under, and fell fifty feet before I got control. Neither of us was in danger as the gallery is two hundred feet up, but I looked silly and it was my own fault; I had violated a safety rule.

There aren't many rules but they are necessary; the first is that orange wings always have the right of way —they're beginners. This flier did not have orange wings but I was overtaking. The flier underneath—or being overtaken—or nearer the wall—or turning counterclockwise, in that order, has the right of way.

I felt foolish and wondered who had seen me, so I went all the way back up, made sure I had clear air, then stooped like a hawk toward the gallery, spilling wings, lifting tail, and letting myself fall like a rock.

I completed my stoop in front of the gallery, lowering and spreading my tail so hard I could feel leg muscles knot and grabbing air with both wings, alulae slotted. I pulled level in an extremely fast glide along the gallery. I could see their eyes pop and thought smugly, "There! That'll show 'em!"

When darn if somebody didn't stoop on *me!* The blast from a flier braking right over me almost knocked me out of control. I grabbed air and stopped a sideslip, used some shipyard words and looked around to see who had blitzed me. I knew the black-and-gold wing pattern—Mary Muhlenburg, my best girl friend. She swung toward me, pivoting on a wing tip. "Hi, Holly! Scared you, didn't I?"

"You did not! You better be careful; the flightmaster'll ground you for a month."

"Slim chance! He's down for coffee."

I flew away, still annoyed, and started to climb. Mary called after me, but I ignored her, thinking, "Mary my girl, I'm going to get over you and fly you right out of the air."

This was a foolish thought as Mary flies every day and has shoulders and pectoral muscles like Mrs. Hercules. By the time she caught up with me I had cooled off and we flew side by side, still climbing. "Perch?" she called out.

"Perch," I agreed. Mary has lovely gossip and I could use a breather. We turned toward our usual perch, a ceiling brace for flood lamps—it isn't supposed to be a perch but the flightmaster hardly ever comes up there.

Mary flew in ahead of me, braked and stalled dead to a perfect landing. I skidded a little but Mary stuck out a wing and steadied me. It isn't easy to come into a perch, especially when you have to approach level. Two years ago a boy who had just graduated from orange wings tried it . . . knocked off his left alula and primaries on a strut—went fluttering and spinning down two thousand feet and crashed. He could have saved himself—you can come

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in safely with a badly damaged wing if you spill air with the other and accept the steeper glide, then stall as you land. But this poor kid didn't know how; he broke his neck, dead as Icarus. I haven't used that perch since.

We folded our wings and Mary sidled over. "Jeff is looking for you," she said with a sly grin.

My insides jumped but I answered coolly, "So? I didn't know he was here."

"Sure. Down there," she added, pointing with her left wing. "Spot him?"

Jeff wears striped red and silver, but she was pointing at the tourist glide slope, a mile away. "No."

"He's there all right." She looked at me sidewise. "But I wouldn't look him up if I were you."

"Why not? Or for that matter, why should I?" Mary can be exasperating.

"Huh? You always run when he whistles. But he has that Earthside siren in tow again today; you might find it embarrassing."

"Mary, whatever are you talking about?"

"Huh? Don't kid me, Holly Jones; you know what I mean."

"I'm sure I don't," I answered with cold dignity.

"Humph! Then you're the only person in Luna City who doesn't. Everybody knows you're crazy about Jeff; everybody knows she's cut you out . . . and that you are simply simmering with jealousy."

Mary is my dearest friend but someday I'm going to skin her for a rug. "Mary, that's preposterously ridiculous! How can you even think such a thing?"

"Look, darling, you don't have to pretend. I'm for you." She patted my shoulders with her secondaries.

So I pushed her over backwards. She fell a hundred feet, straightened out, circled and climbed, and came in beside me, still grinning. It gave me time to decide what to say.

"Mary Muhlenburg, in the first place I am not crazy about anyone, least of all Jeff Hardesty. He and I are simply friends. So it's utterly nonsensical to talk about me being 'jealous.' In the second place Miss Brentwood is a lady and doesn't go around 'cutting out' anyone, least of all me. In the third place she is simply a tourist Jeff is guiding—business, nothing more."

"Sure, sure," Mary agreed placidly. "I was wrong. Still—" She shrugged her wings and shut up.

"'Still' what? Mary, don't be mealy-mouthed."

"Mmm . . . I was wondering how you knew I was talking about Ariel Brentwood—since there isn't anything to it."

"Why, you mentioned her name."

"I did not."

I thought frantically. "Uh, maybe not. But it's perfectly simple. Miss Brentwood is a client I turned over to Jeff myself, so I assumed that she must be the tourist you meant."

"So? I don't recall even saying

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she was a tourist. But since she is just a tourist you two are splitting, why aren't you doing the inside guiding while Jeff sticks to outside work? I thought you guides had an agreement?"

"Huh? If he has been guiding her inside the city, I'm not aware of it—"

"You're the only one who isn't."

"—and I'm not interested; that's up to the grievance committee. But Jeff wouldn't take a fee for inside guiding in any case."

"Oh, sure!—not one he could *bank*. Well, Holly, seeing I was wrong, why don't you give him a hand with her? She wants to learn to glide."

Butting in on that pair was farthest from my mind. "If Mr. Hardesty wants my help, he will ask me. In the meantime I shall mind my own business . . . a practice I recommend to you!"

"Relax, shipmate," she answered, unruffled. "I was doing you a favor."

"Thank you, I don't need one."

"So I'll be on my way—got to practice for the gymkhana." She leaned forward and dropped off. But she didn't practice aerobatics; she dived straight for the tourist slope.

I watched her out of sight, then sneaked my left hand out the hand slit and got at my hanky—awkward when you are wearing wings but the floodlights had made my eyes water. I wiped them and blew my nose and put my hanky away and wiggled my hand back into place, then checked everything, thumbs, toes, and fingers, preparatory to dropping off.

But I didn't. I just sat there, wings drooping, and thought. I had to admit that Mary was partly right; Jeff's head was turned completely . . . over a *groundhog*. So sooner or later he would go Earthside and Jones & Hardesty was finished.

Then I reminded myself that I had been planning to be a spaceship designer like Daddy long before Jeff and I teamed up. I wasn't dependent on anyone; I could stand alone, like Joan of Arc, or Lise Meitner.

I felt better . . . a cold, stern pride, like Lucifer in *Paradise Lost*.

I recognized the red and silver of Jeff's wings while he was far off and I thought about slipping quietly away. But Jeff can overtake me if he tries, so I decided, "Holly, don't be a fool! You've no reason to run . . . just be coolly polite."

He landed by me but didn't sidle up. "Hi, Decimal Point."

"Hi, Zero. Uh, stolen much lately?"

"Just the City Bank but they made me put it back." He frowned and added, "Holly, are you mad at me?"

"Why, Jeff, whatever gave you such a silly notion?"

"Uh . . . something Mary the Mouth said."

"Her? Don't pay any attention to what *she* says. Half of it's always wrong and she doesn't mean the rest."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yeah, a short circuit between her ears. Then you aren't mad?"

"Of *course* not. Why should I be?"

"No reason I know of. I haven't been around to work on the ship for a few days . . . but I've been awfully busy."

"Think nothing of it. I've been terribly busy myself."

"Uh, that's fine. Look, Test Sample, do me a favor. Help me out with a friend—a client, that is—well, she's a friend, too. She wants to learn to use glide wings."

I pretended to consider it. "Anyone I know?"

"Oh, yes. Fact is, you introduced us. Ariel Brentwood."

"'Brentwood?' Jeff, there are so many tourists. Let me think. Tall girl? Blonde? Extremely pretty?"

He grinned like a goof and I almost pushed him off. "That's Ariel!"

"I recall her . . . she expected me to carry her bags. But you don't need help, Jeff. She seemed very clever. Good sense of balance."

"Oh, yes, sure, all of that. Well, the fact is, I want you two to know each other. She's . . . well, she's just wonderful, Holly. A real person, all the way through. You'll love her when you know her better. Uh . . . this seemed like a good chance."

I felt dizzy. "Why, that's very thoughtful, Jeff, but I doubt if she wants to know me better. I'm just a servant she hired—you know groundhogs."

"But she's not at all like the ordinary groundhog. And she does want to know you better—she *told* me so!"

After you told her to think so! I muttered. But I had talked myself into a corner. If I had not been hampered by polite upbringing I would have said, "On your way, vacuum skull! I'm not interested in your groundhog girl friends"—but what I did say was, "OK, Jeff," then gathered the fox to my bosom and dropped off into a glide.

So I taught Ariel Brentwood to "fly." Look, those so-called wings they let tourists wear have fifty square feet of lift surface, no controls except warp in the primaries, a built-in dihedral to make them stable as a table, and a few meaningless degrees of hinging to let the wearer think that he is "flying" by waving his arms. The tail is rigid, and canted so that if you stall (almost impossible) you land on your feet. All a tourist does is run a few yards, lift up his feet (he can't avoid it) and slide down a blanket of air. Then he can tell his grandchildren how he flew, really *flew,* "just like a bird."

An ape could learn to "fly" that much.

I put myself to the humiliation of strapping on a set of the silly things and had Ariel watch while I swung into the Baby's Ladder and let it carry me up a hundred feet to show her that you really and truly could

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"fly" with them. Then I thankfully got rid of them, strapped her into a larger set, and put on my beautiful Storer-Gulls. I had chased Jeff away (two instructors is too many), but when he saw her wing up, he swooped down and landed by us.

I looked up. "You again."

"Hello, Ariel. Hi, Blip. Say, you've got her shoulder straps too tight."

"Tut, tut," I said. "One coach at a time, remember? If you want to help, shuck those gaudy fins and put on some gliders . . . then I'll use you to show how not to. Otherwise get above two hundred feet and stay there; we don't need any dining-lounge pilots."

Jeff pouted like a brat but Ariel backed me up. "Do what teacher says, Jeff. That's a good boy."

He wouldn't put on gliders but he didn't stay clear, either. He circled around us, watching, and got bawled out by the flightmaster for cluttering the tourist area.

I admit Ariel was a good pupil. She didn't even get sore when I suggested that she was rather mature across the hips to balance well; she just said that she had noticed that I had the slimmest behind around there and she envied me. So I quit trying to get her goat, and found myself almost liking her as long as I kept my mind firmly on teaching. She tried hard and learned fast—good reflexes and (despite my dirty crack) good balance. I remarked on it and she admitted diffidently that she had had ballet training.

About mid-afternoon she said, "Could I possibly try real wings?"

"Huh? Gee, Ariel, I don't think so."

"Why not?"

There she had me. She had already done all that could be done with those atrocious gliders. If she was to learn more, she had to have real wings. "Ariel, it's dangerous. It's not what you've been doing, believe me. You might get hurt, even killed."

"Would you be held responsible?"

"No. You signed a release when you came in."

"Then I'd like to try it."

I bit my lip. If she had cracked up without my help, I wouldn't have shed a tear—but to let her do something too dangerous while she was my pupil . . . well, it smacked of David and Uriah. "Ariel, I can't stop you . . . but I should put my wings away and not have anything to do with it."

It was her turn to bite her lip. "If you feel that way, I can't ask you to coach me. But I still want to. Perhaps Jeff will help me."

"He probably will," I blurted out, "if he is as big a fool as I think he is!"

Her company face slipped but she didn't say anything because just then Jeff stalled in beside us. "What's the discussion?"

We both tried to tell him and confused him for he got the idea I had suggested it, and started bawling me out. Was I crazy? Was I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trying to get Ariel hurt? Didn't I have any sense?

"Shut up!" I yelled, then added quietly but firmly, "Jefferson Hardesty, you wanted me to teach your girl friend, so I agreed. But don't butt in and don't think you can get away with talking to me like that. Now beat it! Take wing. Grab air!"

He swelled up and said slowly, "I absolutely forbid it."

Silence for five long counts. Then Ariel said quietly, "Come, Holly. Let's get me some wings."

"Right, Ariel."

But they don't rent real wings. Fliers have their own; they have to. However, there are second-hand ones for sale because kids outgrow them, or people shift to custom-made ones, or something. I found Mr. Schultz who keeps the key, and said that Ariel was thinking of buying but I wouldn't let her without a tryout. After picking over forty-odd pairs I found a set which Johnny Queveras had outgrown but which I knew were all right. Nevertheless I inspected them carefully. I could hardly reach the finger controls but they fitted Ariel.

While I was helping her into the tail surfaces I said, "Ariel? This is still a bad idea."

"I know. But we can't let men think they own us."

"I suppose not."

"They do own us, of course. But we shouldn't let them know it." She was feeling out the tail controls. "The big toes spread them?"

"Yes. But don't do it. Just keep your feet together and toes pointed. Look, Ariel, you really aren't ready. Today all you will do is glide, just as you've been doing. Promise?"

She looked me in the eye. "I'll do exactly what you say . . . not even take wing unless you OK it."

"OK. Ready?"

"I'm ready."

"All right. Wups! I goofed. They aren't orange."

"Does it matter?"

"It sure does." There followed a weary argument because Mr. Schultz didn't want to spray them orange for a tryout. Ariel settled it by buying them, then we had to wait a bit while the solvent dried.

We went back to the tourist slope and I let her glide, cautioning her to hold both alulae open with her thumbs for more lift at slow speeds, while barely sculling with her fingers. She did fine, and stumbled in landing only once. Jeff stuck around, cutting figure eights above us, but we ignored him. Presently I taught her to turn in a wide, gentle bank—you can turn those awful glider things but it takes skill; they're only meant for straight glide.

Finally I landed by her and said, "Had enough?"

"I'll never have enough! But I'll unwing if you say."

"Tired?"

"No." She glanced over her wing at the Baby's Ladder; a dozen fliers were going up it, wings motionless, soaring lazily. "I wish I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could do that just once. It must be heaven."

I chewed it over. "Actually, the higher you are, the safer you are."

"Then why not?"

"Mmm . . . safer *provided* you know what you're doing. Going up that draft is just gliding like you've been doing. You lie still and let it lift you half a mile high. Then you come down the same way, circling the wall in a gentle glide. But you're going to be tempted to do something you don't understand yet—flap your wings, or cut some caper."

She shook her head solemnly. "I won't do anything you haven't taught me."

I was still worried. "Look, it's only half a mile up but you cover five miles getting there and more getting down. Half an hour at least. Will your arms take it?"

"I'm sure they will."

"Well . . . you can start down anytime; you don't have to go all the way. Flex your arms a little now and then, so they won't cramp. Just don't flap your wings."

"I won't."

"OK." I spread my wings. "Follow me."

I led her into the updraft, leaned gently right, then back left to start the counterclockwise climb, all the while sculling very slowly so that she could keep up. Once we were in the groove I called out, "Steady as you are!" and cut out suddenly, climbed and took station thirty feet over and behind her. "Ariel?"

"Yes, Holly?"

"I'll stay over you. Don't crane your neck; you don't have to watch me, I have to watch you. You're doing fine."

"I feel fine!"

"Wiggle a little. Don't stiffen up. It's a long way to the roof. You can scull harder if you want to."

"Aye aye, Cap'n!"

"Not tired?"

"Heavens, no! Girl, I'm living!" She giggled. "And mama said I'd never be an angel!"

I didn't answer because red-and-silver wings came charging at me, braked suddenly and settled into the circle between me and Ariel. Jeff's face was almost as red as his wings. "What the devil do you think you are doing?"

"Orange wings!" I yelled. "Keep clear!"

"Get down out of here! Both of you!"

"Get out from between me and my pupil. You know the rules."

"Ariel!" Jeff shouted. "Lean out of the circle and glide down. I'll stay with you."

"Jeff Hardesty," I said savagely, "I give you three seconds to get out from between us—then I'm going to report you for violation of Rule One. For the third time—*Orange Wings!*"

Jeff growled something, dipped his right wing and dropped out of formation. The idiot sideslipped within five feet of Ariel's wing tip. I should have reported him for that;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all the room you can give a beginner is none too much.

I said, "OK, Ariel?"

"OK, Holly. I'm sorry Jeff is angry."

"He'll get over it. Tell me if you feel tired."

"I'm not. I want to go all the way up. How high are we?"

"Four hundred feet, maybe."

Jeff flew below us a while, then climbed and flew over us . . . probably for the same reason I did: to see better. It suited me to have two of us watching her as long as he didn't interfere; I was beginning to fret that Ariel might not realize that the way down was going to be as long and tiring as the way up. I was hoping she would cry uncle. I knew I could glide until forced down by starvation. But a beginner gets tense.

Jeff stayed generally over us, sweeping back and forth—he's too active to glide very long—while Ariel and I continued to soar, winding slowly up toward the roof. It finally occurred to me when we were about halfway up that I could cry uncle myself; I didn't have to wait for Ariel to weaken. So I called out, "Ariel? Tired now?"

"No."

"Well, *I* am. Could we go down, please?"

She didn't argue, she just said, "All right. What am I to do?"

"Lean right and get out of the circle." I intended to have her move out five or six hundred feet, get into the return down draft, and circle the cave down instead of up. I glanced up, looking for Jeff. I finally spotted him some distance away and much higher but coming toward us. I called out, "Jeff! See you on the ground." He might not have heard me but he would see if he didn't hear; I glanced back at Ariel.

I couldn't find her.

Then I saw her, a hundred feet below—flailing her wings and falling, out of control.

I didn't know how it happened. Maybe she leaned too far, went into a sideslip and started to struggle. But I didn't try to figure it out; I was simply filled with horror. I seemed to hang there frozen for an hour, while I watched her.

But the fact appears to be that I screamed *"Jeff!"* and broke into a stoop.

But I didn't seem to fall, couldn't overtake her. I spilled my wings completely—but couldn't manage to fall; she was as far away as ever.

You do start slowly, of course; our low gravity is the only thing that makes human flying possible. Even a stone falls a scant three feet in the first second. But that first second seemed endless.

Then I knew I was falling, I could feel rushing air—but I still didn't seem to close on her. Her struggles must have slowed her somewhat, while I was in an intentional stoop, wings spilled and raised over my head, falling as fast

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as possible. I had a wild notion that if I could pull even with her, I could shout sense into her head, get her to dive, then straighten out in a glide. But I couldn't *reach* her.

This nightmare dragged on for hours.

Actually we didn't have room to fall for more than twenty seconds; that's all it takes to stoop a thousand feet. But twenty seconds can be horribly long . . . long enough to regret every foolish thing I had ever done or said, long enough to say a prayer for us both . . . and to say goodby to Jeff in my heart. Long enough to see the floor rushing toward us and know that we were both going to crash if I didn't overtake her mighty quick.

I glanced up and Jeff was stooping right over us but a long way up. I looked down at once . . . and I was overtaking her . . . I was passing her—*I was under her!*

Then I was braking with everything I had, almost pulling my wings off. I grabbed air, held it, and started to beat without ever going into level flight. I beat once, twice, three times . . . and hit her from below, jarring us both.

Then the floor hit us.

I felt feeble and dreamily contented. I was on my back in a dim room. I think Mother was with me and I know Daddy was. My nose itched and I tried to scratch it, but my arms wouldn't work. I fell asleep again.

I woke up hungry and wide awake. I was in a hospital bed and my arms still wouldn't work, which wasn't surprising as they were both in casts. A nurse came in with a tray. "Hungry?" she asked.

"Starved," I admitted.

"We'll fix that." She started feeding me like a baby.

I dodged the third spoonful and demanded, "What happened to my arms?"

"Hush," she said and gagged me with a spoon.

But a nice doctor came in later and answered my question. "Nothing much. Three simple fractures. At your age you'll heal in no time. But we like your company so I'm holding you for observation of possible internal injury."

"I'm not hurt inside," I told him. "At least, I don't hurt."

"I told you it was just an excuse."

"Uh, Doctor?"

"Well?"

"Will I be able to fly again?" I waited, scared.

"Certainly. I've seen men hurt worse get up and go three rounds."

"Oh. Well, thanks. Doctor? What happened to the other girl? Is she . . . did she . . . ?"

"Brentwood? She's here."

"She's right here," Ariel agreed from the door. "May I come in?"

My jaw dropped, then I said, "Yeah. Sure. Come in."

The doctor said, "Don't stay long," and left. I said, "Well, sit down."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Thanks." She hopped instead of walked and I saw that one foot was bandaged. She got on the end of the bed.

"You hurt your foot."

She shrugged. "Nothing. A sprain and a torn ligament. Two cracked ribs. But I would have been dead. You know why I'm not?"

I didn't answer. She touched one of my casts. "That's why. You broke my fall and I landed on top of you. You saved my life and I broke both your arms."

"You don't have to thank me. I would have done it for anybody."

"I believe you and I wasn't thanking you. You can't thank a person for saving your life. I just wanted to make sure you knew that I knew it."

I didn't have an answer so I said, "Where's Jeff? Is he all right?"

"He'll be along soon. Jeff's not hurt . . . though I'm surprised he didn't break both ankles. He stalled in beside us so hard that he should have. But Holly . . . Holly my very dear . . . I slipped in so that you and I could talk about him before he got here."

I changed the subject quickly. Whatever they had given me made me feel dreamy and good, but not beyond being embarrassed. "Ariel, what happened? You were getting along fine—then suddenly you were in trouble."

She looked sheepish. "My own fault. You said we were going down, so I looked down. Really looked, I mean. Before that, all my thoughts had been about climbing clear to the roof; I hadn't thought about how far down the floor was. Then I looked down . . . and got dizzy and panicky and went all to pieces." She shrugged. "You were right. I wasn't ready."

I thought about it and nodded. "I see. But don't worry—when my arms are well, I'll take you up again."

She touched my foot. "Dear Holly. But I won't be flying again; I'm going back where I belong."

"Earthside?"

"Yes. I'm taking the *Billy Mitchell* on Wednesday."

"Oh. I'm sorry."

She frowned slightly. "Are you? Holly, you don't like me, do you?"

I was startled silly. What can you say? Especially when it's true? "Well," I said slowly, "I don't dislike you. I just don't know you very well."

She nodded. "And I don't know you very well . . . even though I got to know you a lot better in a very few seconds. But Holly . . . listen please and don't get angry. It's about Jeff. He hasn't treated you very well the last few days—while I've been here, I mean. But don't be angry with him. I'm leaving and everything will be the same."

That ripped it open and I couldn't ignore it, because if I did, she would assume all sorts of things that weren't so. So I had to explain . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about me being a career woman . . . how, if I had seemed upset, it was simply distress at breaking up the firm of Jones & Hardesty before it even finished its first starship . . . how I was *not* in love with Jeff but simply valued him as a friend and associate . . . but if Jones & Hardesty couldn't carry on, then Jones & Company would. "So you see, Ariel, it isn't necessary for you to give up Jeff. If you feel you owe me something, just forget it. It isn't necessary."

She blinked and I saw with amazement that she was holding back tears. "Holly, Holly . . . you don't understand at all."

"I understand all right. I'm not a child."

"No, you're a grown woman . . . but you haven't found it out." She held up a finger. "One—Jeff doesn't love me."

"I don't believe it."

"Two . . . I don't love him."

"I don't believe that, either."

"Three . . . you say you don't love him—but we'll take that up when we come to it. Holly, am I beautiful?"

Changing the subject is a female trait but I'll never learn to do it that fast. "Huh?"

"I said, 'Am I beautiful?' "

"You know darn well you are!"

"Yes. I can sing a bit and dance, but I would get few parts if I were not, because I'm no better than a third-rate actress. So I have to be beautiful. How old am I?"

I managed not to boggle. "Huh? Older than Jeff thinks you are. Twenty-one, at least. Maybe twenty-two."

She sighed. "Holly, I'm old enough to be your mother."

"Huh? I don't believe that, either."

"I'm glad it doesn't show. But that's why, though Jeff is a dear, there never was a chance that I could fall in love with him. But how I feel about him doesn't matter; the important thing is that *he* loves *you*."

"*What?* That's the silliest thing you've said yet! Oh, he *likes* me—or did. But that's all." I gulped. "And it's all I want. Why, you should hear the way he talks to me."

"I have. But boys that age can't say what they mean; they get embarrassed."

"But—"

"Wait, Holly. I saw something you didn't because you were knocked cold. When you and I bumped, do you know what happened?"

"Uh, no."

"Jeff arrived like an avenging angel, a split second behind us. He was ripping his wings off as he hit, getting his arms free. He didn't even look at me. He just stepped across me and picked you up and cradled you in his arms, all the while bawling his eyes out."

"He *did?*"

"He did."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I mulled it over. Maybe the big lunk did kind of like me, after all.

Ariel went on, "So you see, Holly, even if you don't love him, you must be very gentle with him, because he loves you and you can hurt him terribly."

I tried to think. Romance was still something that a career woman should shun . . . but if Jeff really did feel that way—well . . . would it be compromising my ideals to marry him just to keep him happy? To keep the firm together? Eventually, that is?

But if I did, it wouldn't be Jones & Hardesty; it would be Hardesty & Hardesty.

Ariel was still talking: "—you might even fall in love with him. It does happen, hon, and if it did, you'd be sorry if you had chased him away. Some other girl would grab him; he's awfully nice."

"But—" I shut up for I heard Jeff's step—I can always tell it. He stopped in the door and looked at us, frowning.

"Hi, Ariel."

"Hi, Jeff."

"Hi, Fraction." He looked me over. "My, but you're a mess."

"You aren't pretty yourself. I hear you have flat feet."

"Permanently. How do you brush your teeth with those things on your arms?"

"I don't."

Ariel slid off the bed, balanced on one foot. "Must run. See you later, kids."

"So long, Ariel."

"Good-by, Ariel. Uh . . . thanks."

Jeff closed the door after she hopped away, came to the bed and said gruffly, "Hold still."

Then he put his arms around me and kissed me.

Well, I couldn't stop him, could I? With both arms broken? Besides, it was consonant with the new policy for the firm. I was startled speechless because Jeff never kisses me, except birthday kisses, which don't count. But I tried to kiss back and show that I appreciated it.

I don't know what that stuff was they had been giving me but my ears began to ring and I felt dizzy again.

Then he was leaning over me. "Runt," he said mournfully, "you sure give me a lot of grief."

"You're no bargain yourself, flathead," I answered with dignity.

"I suppose not." He looked me over sadly. "What are you crying for?"

I didn't know that I had been. Then I remembered why. "Oh, Jeff—I busted my pretty wings!"

"We'll get you more. Uh, brace yourself. I'm going to do it again."

"All right." He did.

I suppose Hardesty & Hardesty has more rhythm than Jones & Hardesty.

It really sounds better.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Loint of Paw

THERE WAS NO QUESTION THAT MONTIE Stein had, through clever fraud, stolen better than $100,000. There was also no question that he was apprehended one day after the statute of limitations had expired.

It was his manner of avoiding arrest during that interval that brought on the epoch-making case of the State of New York *vs.* Montgomery Harlow Stein, with all its consequences. It introduced law to the fourth dimension.

For, you see, after having committed the fraud and possessed himself of the hundred grand plus, Stein had calmly entered a time machine, of which he was in illegal possession, and set the controls for seven years and one day in the future.

Stein's lawyer put it simply. Hiding in time was not fundamentally different from hiding in space. If the forces of law had not uncovered Stein in the seven-year interval that was their hard luck.

The District Attorney pointed out that the statute of limitations was not intended to be a game between the law and the criminal. It was a merciful measure designed to protect a culprit from indefinitely prolonged fear of arrest. For certain crimes, a defined period of apprehension of apprehension (so to speak) was considered punishment enough. But Stein, the D. A. insisted, had not experienced any period of apprehension at all.

Stein's lawyer remained unmoved. The law said nothing about measuring the extent of a culprit's fear and anguish. It simply set a time limit.

The D. A. said that Stein had not lived through the limit.

Defense stated that Stein was seven years older now than at the time of the crime and had therefore lived through the limit.

The D. A. challenged the statement and the defense produced Stein's birth certificate. He was born in 2973. At the time of the crime, 3004, he was 31. Now, in 3011, he was 38.

The D. A. shouted that Stein was not physiologically 38, but 31.

Defense pointed out freezingly that the law, once the individual was granted to be mentally competent, recognized solely chronological age, which could be obtained only by subtracting the date of birth from the date of now.

The D. A., growing impassioned, swore that if Stein were allowed to go free, half the laws on the books would be useless.

Then change the laws, said Defense, to take time travel into account; but until the laws are changed, let them be enforced as written.

Judge Neville Preston took a week to consider and then handed down his decision. It was a turning point in the history of law. It is almost a pity, then, that some people suspect Judge Preston to have been swayed in his way of thinking by the irresistible impulse to phrase his decision as he did.

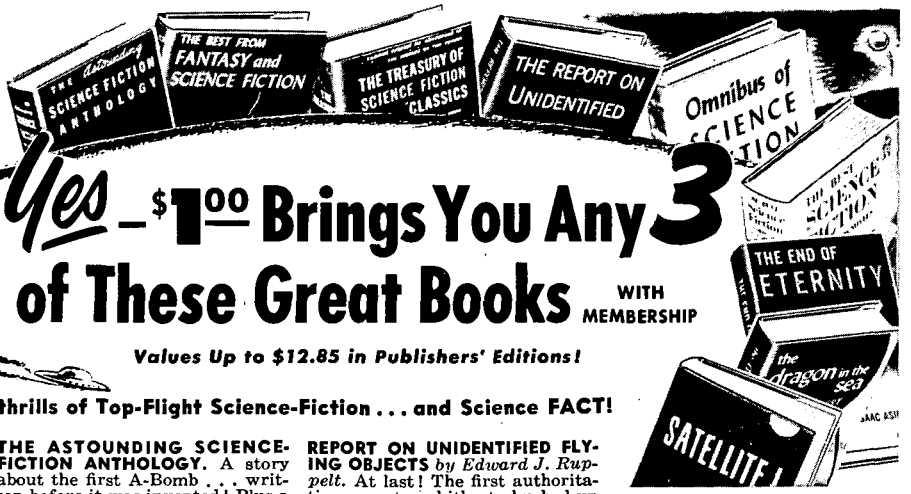
For that decision, in full, was:

"A niche in time saves Stein"

ISAAC ASIMOV

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—continued from Back Cover


THE Astounding SCIENCE FICTION ANTHOLOGY
THE BEST FROM FANTASY and SCIENCE FICTION
THE TREASURY OF SCIENCE FICTION CLASSICS
THE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED
Omnibus of SCIENCE FICTION
THE BEST OF SCIENCE FICTION
THE END OF ETERNITY
the dragon in the sea
SATELLITE!

Yes—$1.00 Brings You Any 3 of These Great Books WITH MEMBERSHIP

Values Up to $12.85 in Publishers' Editions!

thrills of Top-Flight Science-Fiction . . . and Science FACT!

THE ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION ANTHOLOGY. A story about the first A-Bomb . . . written before it was invented! Plus a score of other best tales from a dozen years of Astounding Science-Fiction Magazine. (Pub. ed. $3.50)

THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE-FICTION. (New edition) 17 thrilling stories selected from *Fantasy and Science-Fiction Magazine.* Adventure in other worlds...mystery, intrigue, suspense! (Pub. ed. $3.50)

TREASURY OF SCIENCE-FICTION CLASSICS. 4 famous novels; a complete play; scores of all-time great S-F stories, including H. G. Wells' "Invasion from Mars," made famous by Orson Welles' hoax newscast. (Pub. ed. $2.95)

• • •

NOW—THE BEST NEW SCIENCE-FICTION BOOKS FOR ONLY $1.00 EACH!

IMAGINE — ANY 3 of these full-size, brand-new science-fiction books—yours for just $1! Crammed with thrills . . . written by top-notch science-fiction authors. An $8.85 to $12.85 value, complete in handsome, permanent bindings. Each month the SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB brings you the finest brand-new full-length books FOR ONLY $1 EACH (plus a few cents shipping charges) — even though they cost $2.50, $3.50 and up in publishers' editions! You take ONLY those books you really want—as few as 4 a year.

SEND NO MONEY

Take your choice of ANY 3 of the new books described here—at only $1 for ALL 3. Two are your gift books for joining; the other is your first selection. Mail coupon RIGHT NOW to:

SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB
Dept. MFSF-8, Garden City, N. Y.

REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS *by Edward J. Ruppelt.* At last! The first authoritative report on hitherto hushed-up facts about "flying saucers" . . . by a former Air Force expert in charge of their investigation. NOT fiction, but amazing fact! (Pub. ed. $4.95)

OMNIBUS OF SCIENCE-FICTION. 43 classic stories by top authors. Wonders of Earth and Man. Amazing Inventions. Space Travel and Visitors from Outer Space. Adventures in Dimension. Worlds of Tomorrow. (Pub. ed. $3.50)

BEST SCIENCE-FICTION STORIES AND NOVELS: 1956, *Ed. by T. E. Dikty.* 14 top-notch short stories and novelettes by such well-known writers as Robert Bloch, Frank Robinson, Mark Clifton, many others. (Pub. ed. $3.95)

DRAGON IN THE SEA *by Frank Herbert.* You're on a 21st-century undersea mission from which no human has ever returned. Now, 8000 feet down, *an unknown crewman wants you DEAD!* (Pub. ed. $2.95)

SATELLITE! *by Erik Bergaust & William Beller.* Top experts reveal full FACTS on the first man-made Satellite—information not even available in technical journals! (Pub. ed. $3.95)

THE END OF ETERNITY *by Isaac Asimov.* You *look* like other men, but you're an *Eternal*—sent from a timeless realm to change history. But you decided to travel through time and space to find *forbidden love.* (Pub. ed. $2.95)

WHICH 3 DO YOU WANT FOR ONLY $1.00?

SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB
Dept. MFSF-8 Garden City, N. Y.

Please rush me the 3 books checked below, as my gift books and first selection. Bill me only $1 for all three (plus few cents shipping charges), and enroll me as a member of the Science-Fiction Book Club. Every month send me the Club's free bulletin, "Things to Come," so that I may decide whether or not I wish to receive the coming selection described therein. For each book I accept. I will pay only $1 plus shipping. I do not have to take a book every month (only four during each year I am a member)—and I may resign at any time after accepting four selections.

SPECIAL NO-RISK GUARANTEE: If not delighted, I may return all books in 7 days, pay nothing, and this membership will be cancelled!

- ☐ Astounding Science-Fiction Anthology
- ☐ Best from Fantasy & S-F
- ☐ Best S-F Stories and Novels
- ☐ Dragon in the Sea
- ☐ End of Eternity
- ☐ Omnibus of Science-Fiction
- ☐ Report on UFO's
- ☐ Satellite!
- ☐ Treasury of S-F Classics

Name_____(Please Print)

Address_____

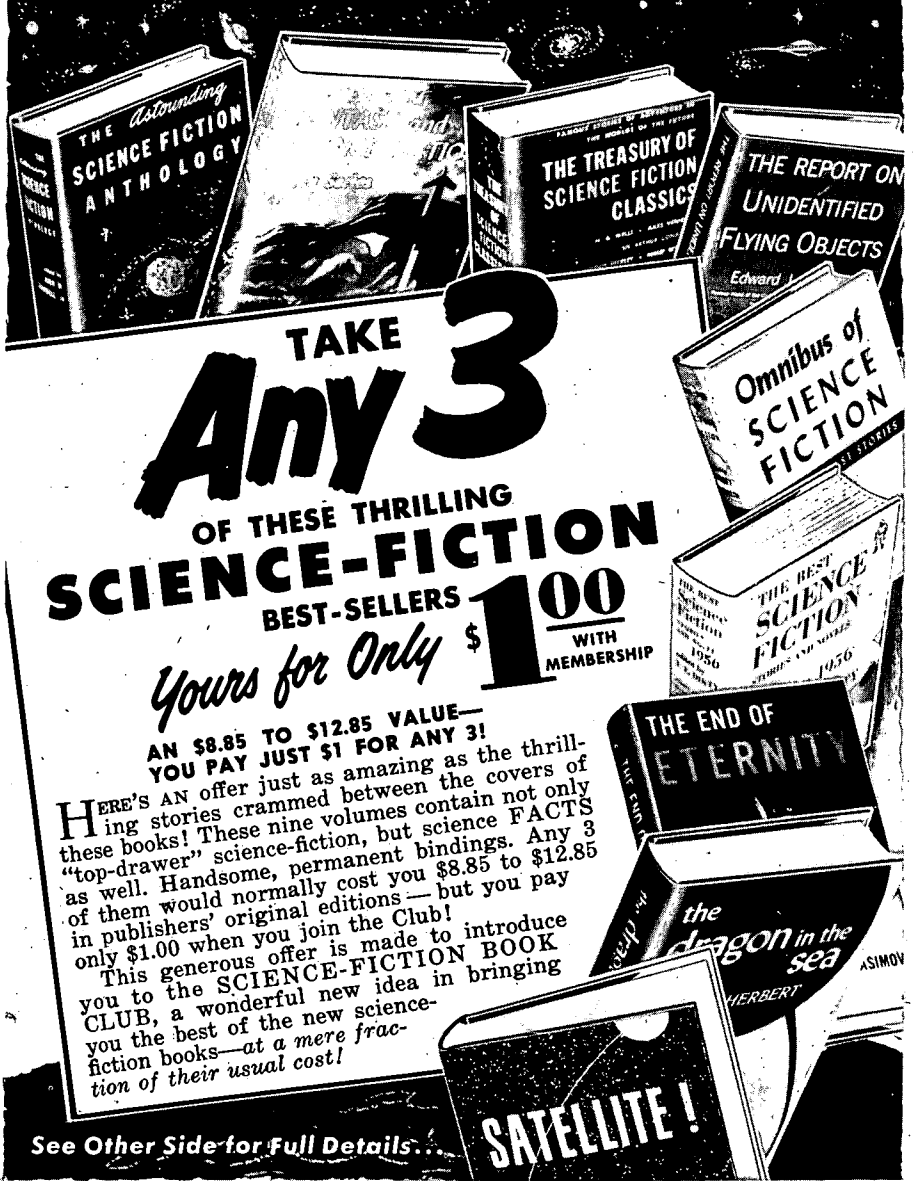
City_____ Zone_____ State_____

SAME OFFER TO RESIDENTS OF CANADA: Address Science-Fiction Book Club, 105 Bond St., Toronto 2. Offer good in U. S. A. & Canada only.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Most Generous Offer Ever Made By

The SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB



TAKE Any 3

OF THESE THRILLING

SCIENCE-FICTION BEST-SELLERS

Yours for Only $1.00 WITH MEMBERSHIP

AN $8.85 TO $12.85 VALUE— YOU PAY JUST $1 FOR ANY 3!

HERE'S AN offer just as amazing as the thrilling stories crammed between the covers of these books! These nine volumes contain not only "top-drawer" science-fiction, but science FACTS as well. Handsome, permanent bindings. Any 3 of them would normally cost you $8.85 to $12.85 in publishers' original editions — but you pay only $1.00 when you join the Club!

This generous offer is made to introduce you to the SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLUB, a wonderful new idea in bringing you the best of the new science-fiction books—*at a mere fraction of their usual cost!*

See Other Side for Full Details...

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED